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THE FAITH AND THE FELLOWSHIP

BY

OSCAR L. JOSEPH

AUTHOR OF "CHRIST IN HISTORY," ETC.

WITH A FOREWORD BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY MOTHER

LUCY LOOS JOSEPH,

MY UNCLE

THE HONORABLE FREDERICK CHARLES LOOS, C.M.G.,

BURGHER REPRESENTATIVE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF CEYLON,

MY GRAND-UNCLE

JAMES LOOS, M.D. (ST. ANDREWS),

FOUNDER AND FIRST PRINCIPAL OF THE CEYLON MEDICAL COLLEGE.

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FOREWORD

THIS volume is peculiarly valuable for many reasons. In the first place, it deals with the vital question of Christianity and its organised expression in the Church. Further, it transfers the issues arising out of so comprehensive a theme to the wider arenas of human life and there discusses them with insight, reverence and scholarly emphasis. The message of the Everlasting Gospel of the Risen Lord is carefully expounded, and the exposition is marked at every stage by intimate knowledge, and by freshness and force of statement.

Mr. Joseph has enjoyed special advantages which are herein displayed. He hails from the foreign and non-Christian world, where he witnessed the problems and the victories of missionary effort. The great literary productions of Hindu and Buddhist faith and practice are contrasted with the operations of the teachings of the New Testament. Indeed, the book casts a welcome light on the study of comparative

religion. The author's residence in the British Empire and in our own Republic has given him a conception of Christian obligation which to be felt aright must be experienced at first-hand, and which arises from actual contact with the realms we propose to conquer for the Kingdom of our Master. This sense of obligation prevails throughout his book and lends weight to its conclusions.

We realise that this is the product of a soul deeply moved both by the grandeur of the Evangel and the necessities it alone can satisfy. Wide reading and close observation have added to the merits he discloses, and enriched his clear and positive style. The strategic place and power of Christianity here receive another and a unique tribute.

S. Parkes Cadman.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE REVELATION OF LOVE

"God is a most elastic term, capable of narrowing to suit the meanest capacity, of expanding to fill the highest. It seems to have a sense intelligible to the simplest mind, while to the profoundest it becomes the symbol of thoughts too high to be spoken, too immense to be comprehended. But though it may signify very different things to different minds, yet, what it signifies does not thereby become unreal. It stands as the symbol of the best and highest Being man can conceive, his idea of the Being rising with his thought of the good and the high. The notions of the men who first called the being they worshipped God, do not bind the latest; the word may remain while its contents are transfigured, as it were changed from one degree of glory to another. But while later may outgrow the ideas earlier ages expressed by the term God, they do not outgrow the idea which the term represents."

—*A. M. Fairbairn: "The City of God: A Series of Discussions in Religion," page 193.*

CHAPTER ONE

THE REVELATION OF LOVE

THE coming of Jesus Christ was heralded by a weird prophet who established his pulpit on the borders of the desert. The Baptist did not consult the tastes of his large audiences nor did he even consider their feelings because he was animated by a dominant passion for righteousness. The times were fearfully out of joint: men had wandered away from the fundamental issues of life and religion; and they were trying to satisfy the demands of the inner life with a patch-work system. How foolish and treacherous it would have been for the man who clearly saw the downward drift of things to have spoken "peace, peace, when there was no peace." It was part of John's mission to awaken the people from their fatal self-complacency and to direct their thought to the sublime realities and mandates of life. His career was abruptly closed but like Amos of an earlier day and Savonarola of a later day, he had sowed the seed which was to yield a worthy harvest. The work

of the Baptist was taken up by Jesus who showed His sympathy with the uncompromising prophet when He used his identical sentiments: "Repent ye for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." His message was vital and practical and He was popular because He spoke pleasantly without the sternness of His loyal predecessor.

It was not long before Jesus gathered a company of disciples, to whom He set forth the ideals and aims of fellowship and service. The Sermon on the Mount is a compilation by Matthew of some of His teachings. It is an illuminative summary of penetrative principles which deal with what is central and essential. Its sentences are not counsels *of* perfection, fit only for the cloister or for a select type of humanity who are more virtuous than the rest. They are rather counsels *for* perfection; and they are addressed to those who believe in God and who realise that they are His children. You cannot read them without being impressed by the comprehensive and consistent view of life therein advocated. The stress is laid on what is of first consequence. It is indeed a mark of wisdom and insight to know how to emphasise that which needs special attention, just as it is a mark of spiritual poverty not to know how to distinguish between the things

that differ. All programmes of reform must clearly convey the impression that the purpose is pure, the motive sincere, and the determination undivided. The deeds performed will then be of intrinsic excellence and impressive helpfulness.

The ideal presented by Jesus is at once unique and practical. Valuable as have been the contributions made by the great teachers of the ethnic faiths towards understanding and prosecuting the religious life, their teachings are onesided. Buddha taught that the ideal character can be achieved only by the person who retires from the world in ascetic seclusion; he thus placed a premium on a life which is self-centred and self-absorbed, and the fatal error in his message was the serious omission of God as the vitalising influence of life. Confucius was guided by the principle of worldly wisdom: his teaching was inspired by the thought of expediency as the law of life and of the superior worth of conformity to establish usage; but this is of the earth, earthy, without perspective, vision, or outlook. Zoroaster introduced a dualism when he set up the rival principles of good and evil in opposition to each other and left it problematical whether Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, or Ahriman, the spirit of evil, would eventually be victorious. Such a note of doubt

and uncertainty cannot but paralyse the efforts of the adherents of this teaching; it has indeed done so to judge from the spiritual stagnation of Parsism. Mohammed rivalled all his contemporaries in proclaiming with prophetic unction the solitary sovereignty of God and in vehemently denouncing the prevalent idolatry of both Christian and pagan. But his teaching was marked and marred by fatalism, and those who accepted the God of Islam did so in a spirit of fear and in superstitious submissiveness to the divine demands. How different to all these conceptions is that set forth by Jesus Christ concerning the Heavenly Father! The elements of His character are so mixed that there is a proportionate radiance of holiness and grace, of righteousness and love. Faith, such as Christ taught, does not acknowledge a fierce and furious God nor does it confess a soft and weak God who is "destitute of moral vigour," ready to overlook blunders and perversities, and who acts as though He were on the verge of senility and second childhood. This God is not an aristocrat nor a tyrant, but the supreme sympathiser, the strong helper, and the strict upholder of righteousness. His majesty does not, however, suppress His mercy; His grace is not lost in His holiness; His love is not obscured by His justice. Such a revelation

not only commands the filial and reverential worship of the believer, but also persuades him to be inspired and guided in truth and rectitude by its ennobling encouragements.

Some assert that the teachings of Jesus are impractical. This implies a criticism of the Master's knowledge and of His understanding of the mind and heart of man. Did He really call upon His followers to do that which they were inherently incapable of accomplishing? Was He parading Himself in a pedantic fashion before His hearers? Was He actually exhibiting an ability to discourse theoretically on virtue without any intention of expecting His hearers to be genuinely influenced by His appeals? Did He expect them to take Him seriously? Or were they rather to accept His pronouncements with mental and moral reservations, and so comfort themselves with the curious thought that the ideal of Jesus was meant merely to charm and not to command them? We have only to ask ourselves these questions to see how absurd they are, because they reflect discreditably on the fair character of the Master. He certainly did hold up a high standard but nothing lower than this goal of Godlikeness would ever have satisfied the restless and energetic spirit of man nor have done justice to his vast latent possibilities. The imperative

note which is so repeatedly heard in the exhortations of Jesus furthermore make it evident that they are capable of execution and that these obligatory aspects of summons to clear-sighted duty cannot be ignored. We can then show our loyalty to Him and realise the best in us only as we render hearty obedience without any hesitation or reservation whatsoever.

"Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is the ideal for the Christian and it is set forth in a terse and testing style. God is the highest term and the final authority in life. Jesus did not care to prove the existence of God; it would have been as superfluous as carrying coals to Newcastle. In fact none of His hearers was so dull as to question the reality of the divine presence. They did, however, differ in their understanding of the character of God. The supreme merit of the gospel of Jesus is that He proclaimed a God of wondrous love and of unspeakable goodness, the glory of whose personality was reflected in Him. An illustration of the perfection of God is furnished in Matthew, chapter 5. 43-48. We here learn that when the divine love takes possession of the life, it becomes a dominating principle, and wherever it is freely exercised, its power is irresistible. Nothing can withstand the magnanimity, the

impartiality, and the generosity of spirit which characterise those persons who are swayed and strengthened by this "love divine, all loves excelling."

God can be known and interpreted only by what is best in us. The rude savage and man-eater conceives of a God of violent passions who can be appeased and honoured only as his insatiable appetite for cruelty is satisfied; his god is a magnified image of himself. The god of those who live under an Oriental monarchy is frequently thought of as despotic in power, tyrannical in demands, and swift to visit vengeance on the disobedient. Wholly unlike these lower and imperfect ideas is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His character of goodness is perfect, without any stain of bitterness; His holiness is wholesome, and stimulates the purest of energies; His love is profound and far-reaching so that no one is outside the pale of His abundant and abounding grace. He is perfect in the sense that every form of excellence belongs to Him, unweakened by defect, unhampered by limitation, unsullied by failure. His inward glory finds consistent expression in deeds of mercy and truth, and the soul which contemplates His splendour is lost in wonder, love and praise. This ideal is

not some cold and exacting code but one that has been embodied in a divine Personality with whom we can have fellowship and who communicates His Spirit from more to more, according to the measure of our spiritual sensitiveness and responsiveness. For let it be remembered that this God is not the Absolute, alone and apart from men amid the summits of severe solitude. He is the divine Associate of men, the never-failing Companion, self-revealing and self-imparting in gracious communion. He is not merely a spectator of the activities of mankind but a sharer in all our divers experiences of weal and woe. He is personal and so there is intercommunication; He is ethical and therefore the factors of righteousness and truth regulate the intercourse; He is infinite and worthy of approach by man in the times of depression and weariness; He is knowable and man is not left to guess his way or be in wandering mazes lost. This is the amazing revelation of love which came through Jesus Christ. Classic expression has been given the thought by Browning in lines which are familiar but which never fail to stir the soul. It is Karshish the Arab physician who is writing of his strange meeting with Lazarus whom Christ had raised from the dead:

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too,
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee.'"

Perfection is a relative term when applied to man. There are grades and degrees of life from childhood up to old age; there are various types of character, influenced by temperament and education. Holiness in man is not wholeness in the sense of completion. It is a progressive holiness, and this fact is evidenced in the larger output of the virtues of goodness and grace and in the luxuriant bearing of the fruits of the Spirit. It is also evident that the vision of the ideal grows with increasing clearness and even appeals with more exacting energy as the character develops. Just as the adult has responsibilities which are unknown to the youth, so the mature saint realises and fulfils demands which are impossible to the beginner in the Christian life. Recall the confession of saints who have sounded the depths of grace and who are scaling the heights of sanctity, and you are impressed by the spirit of humility and of healthy aspiration: "Not that I have

already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. . . . I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore as many as are perfect (full-grown) be thus minded'' (Phil. 3. 12, 13). There is no suggestion or hint of compromise in the earnest purpose to become possessed of the blessedness of crystal purity which will reflect like the facets of a diamond the grace and glory of the eternal God. In unswerving obedience to this divine-human ideal, the growing Christian advances in sanctification of the Spirit, in sobriety of life and in sacramental service of his fellows. The religious is thus bound up with the ethical in the higher unity of the spiritual.

What makes this summons to perfection so attractive lies in the fact that it is a movement towards renewing the image of God in us. However far men may have wandered, however much they may have failed, however numerous may be their shortcomings, they still remain the children of God. 'Tis true that the family likeness is very slight, but the touch of grace can work wonders:

> "Down in the human heart,
> Crushed by the tempter,

Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart,
Wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more."

Jesus was then not a visionary but an idealist who thoroughly understood human nature when He sounded the imperative call and urged men to go forward with no thought of retreat. The summons have not been withdrawn, and if we disregard them it is at our peril. What makes the mandate so encouraging is the other fact that in our endeavour to reach this shining summit we are aided by divine grace. By dependence on Him through the communion of prayer, by devotion to Him in consecration to duty, by deeds of kindness from day to day, we shall have more of a glowing and growing resemblance to God, and thus shall we advertise our filial and fraternal relationships. This ideal furthermore furnishes the mighty dynamic which drives the chariot wheels of life,

"On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God."

This revelation of the nature and concern of God has set up a new standard of life. The character of God is seen to be one of gracious impartiality and loving magnanimity. He deals

with men in no scant and miserly fashion. His large confidence in them leads Him to show a spirit of wondrous patience. The just and the unjust, the good and the bad are equally the recipients of His benevolence. So must the Christian show his love, regardless of calendar, country or creed, and not be satisfied with any minimum measure of effort. A new motive has also come into life and we are encouraged to be and to become like the Heavenly Father, whose we are and whom we serve. This appeal to all the faculties of knowing, feeling and willing is quickening in its effects, for the response thereto brings poise, peace and power. We are thus able to submit to the new test of life without fear or hesitancy, because our faith assures us that by fellowship with God we shall always be at our best whatever the emergency. Jesus was absolutely right in proclaiming this gospel of perfection. We shall be wise as we accept it and act in filial loyalty to Him, "in whom we live and move and have our being."

CHAPTER TWO: THE GLORY OF CHRIST

"The most careful scrutiny of the New Testament discloses no trace of a Christianity in which Jesus has any other place than that which is assigned Him in the faith of the historical Church. When the fullest allowance is made for the diversities of intellectual and even of moral interest which prevail in the different writers and the Christian societies which they address, there is one thing in which they are indistinguishable—the attitude of their souls to Christ. They all set Him in the same incomparable place. They all acknowledge to Him the same immeasurable debt. He determines, as no other does or can, all their relations to God and to each other. While His true manhood is unquestionably assumed, He is set as unquestionably on the side of reality which we call Divine and which confronts man; He embodies for faith that Divine love and power which work out man's salvation. It is the place thus assigned to Christ which gives its religious unity to the New Testament, and which has kept the Christian religion one all through its history."

—*James Denney: "Jesus and the Gospel," page 329.*

CHAPTER TWO

THE GLORY OF CHRIST

JESUS made a deep impression on people from the very beginning of His public ministry. He came upon the scenes of human life in a quiet and friendly manner. The first interview which He had with two of the disciples of John the Baptist led those two men to the decisive conclusion that He certainly was the Messiah of ancient promise. The long series of eager expectations which had lodged in the breast of lawgiver, priest, prophet and saint remained an inspiring ideal. In moments of rapt devotion when they beheld visions of the good time coming this arresting figure appeared upon the distant horizon. The hope of centuries had at last been realised and the reality was nobler and more gracious than anything which the seers of ancient time had contemplated.

The Gospel of John is the latest of the New Testament books. It was written by the man who knew Jesus the longest and the most intimately. There was no doubt in his mind that

Jesus is the one and only centre of the world's spiritual life. He is the revelation of the eternal God. His inward nature and character, His Providence and Fatherhood, His purpose, will and power were made known through the divine-human personality of our blessed Lord and Saviour. John wrote to make this truth clear, and this conviction was shared by the entire Church of the first century. The message of the epistle to the Colossians is that Christ is absolutely indispensable to humanity and that He is adequately sufficient to meet all the various needs of the higher life. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; that is to say, the perfection and glory of God were permanently embodied in the Incarnate Christ. He is therefore the completest expression of the divine thought; He is the best manifestation of the absolute God; He is the final utterance of the eternal Spirit. What God is can be clearly and thoroughly understood in Christ, for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has been given in the face of Jesus Christ.

Those who came in contact with Jesus were moved more by His goodness than by His genius. This latter is a question of degrees and it produces admiration by the exhibition of bril-

liance of parts and of exceptional ability. Goodness, on the other hand, is Godlikeness and it has to do with character which in the case of Christ was of such overwhelming grandeur as to be deeply impressive. "Never man so spake"; "We never saw it on this wise"; "Truly this was a son of God"—these were testimonies from outsiders. The stirring confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" is a testimony from inside, which strikingly expresses the consistent attitude to Him of the entire New Testament. All this is in perfect harmony with His own claims: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also"; "All things that the Father hath are mine"; "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins"; "Come unto Me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He who spoke these words had either inexcusable conceit or was pitifully self-deceived, or He was gloriously justified in uttering them. The last conclusion is the most satisfactory, and by it the Church has stood.

The symmetrical portrayal of character in the Beatitudes has never been surpassed. As an ideal it cannot be improved and it is, moreover, appropriate to the dreamy Oriental as well as the deed-loving Occidental. The best efforts of the finest men have, however, fallen

far short of this standard. But in Jesus the ideal has become actual in a way that satisfies the intellect, gratifies the feelings, pacifies the spirit, and inspires the will of man to make the consciousness of Jesus the test by which to regulate his whole life. It is worth noting that He alone of all the sons of men had the glowing experience of moral and spiritual unity with God. Thoreau once remarked that he was able to say like Jesus: "I and the Father are one," and when it was reported to Carlyle the old sage replied: "Ah! but Jesus got the world to believe Him." They even went further and accepted Him as the possessor of all the grace and wisdom of God. Since He was so closely akin to God He has also shown Himself to be in blessed kinship with men.

Jesus thus occupies a position of singular supremacy. All attempts to place the other teachers of religion by the side of Him have failed. Every comparison becomes a contrast. The great seers and reformers are provincial while He alone is universal. Their message was coloured and influenced by their respective national traditions. They are like exotic plants which do not thrive in a foreign land as well as they do in their native climes. Confucius has no appeal outside of China; Mohammed is out of place in America; Buddha is ineffective

anywhere in the Occident; but Jesus is equally at home in any and every Continent, and He remarkably fits every conceivable case. He attracts men of divers conditions to Himself, and whatever their temperaments or aspirations, He always completes their lives. Look at the gospels for illustration. What different and even contrasted types were drawn to this magnetic personality. The Roman centurion and the Samaritans of Sychar, the Syrophœnician woman and Martha of Bethany, the publicans and the despised as well as the pious and devout who waited for the consolation of Israel—all found Him to be satisfactory. It is still the same. The labouring man and the professional man, the outcast and the élite, the upper crust of society and the submerged tenth have found that they not only need Jesus but they also fall in love with Him as soon as He is fairly presented to them.

Here is another reason why He is so indispensable. What the great religious teachers taught can be understood regardless of their persons. The law which was given by Moses would not lose its sanction if it came through some other authority. We know little of Plato and Socrates, but their teachings can be accepted without any consideration of them. The

pity and compassion preached by Buddha have an impressive appeal apart from his character. The duty of submissiveness to Allah is as imperative by whomsoever it might have been enforced. The practical sayings of Confucius are valid even if we know nothing of the man who uttered them. But none of these conditions is possible with Jesus and His gospel. He is the best part of His message. "Christ is Christianity" is a familiar and emphatic phrase, and it expresses a truth which we cannot fail to recognise as soon as we think of the Sermon on the Mount or the discourses in the upper room. The resplendent excellence of the Beatitudes is a reflection of His own character and what He said can be understood only in the light of the crystal purity and celestial perfection of His wondrous person. Indeed, the greatness of His preaching lay in the fact that the subject was Himself. He was not only greater than all He said and did but everything centred in Him. Unlike those others who spoke of God and destiny, in the case of Jesus it was not the acceptance of the message but of the messenger which gave life eternal.

This distinction is worth emphasising because herein is the signal secret of the power of Christianity. The New Testament gives the central place to Christ not because He was the

bringer of a new revelation from God nor chiefly as the imparter of inspiration for life, nor as the promulgator of a new and better legislation. The great reason is that He is conspicuously the giver of redemption from sin made possible by the sacrifice of His own life. And so all references to Him are marked by enthusiastic gratefulness, undoubted loyalty, and undivided love. Paul has said it for them all in words which have the glow of adoration and devotion: "Who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Not only could every member of the early Church have heartily endorsed it, but every member in good standing in the Church in every century could also say so with equal heartiness of spirit.

The importance of Jesus for the Christian life is furthermore seen in the theological controversies which disturbed the Church from time to time. They were not unmixed evils because they compelled the leaders to construct adequate conceptions of the person and work of Christ. Those people then who say that it does not make much difference what a man believes so long as his life is right, do not understand what they are talking about. Had the Church accepted such a conclusion, its testimony to truth would have been vitiated because

of satisfaction with half-truths which are always more dangerous than outspoken errors. Wherever a "full" Christianity has been accepted the claims of Christ have been worthily recognised and Christians have regulated their lives by the thought of what their Saviour and Lord would have them to do. Thus only can the vitality and energy of the Church be increased and its influence felt as a potent power in the industrial, social, and practical life of the world, in community, national, and international relations.

It was the experience of redemption which the Christians received from Christ that led them to hold such an exalted conception of Him. They argued that one who had done so much for them in bringing them out of darkness into light, in giving them a sense of liberty from the control of sin, in bringing the distant God near to them and making Him very real in their lives, in imparting to them a humanitarian view of life, far bigger than what is to be found in the ideals of nationalism; that one who had given them nothing short of spiritual emancipation and enlightenment must be out of the ordinary. He surely has exceptional qualifications and endowments and is the Son of God in a way that belongs exclusively to Him. This then was a severely practical test. He whose

works were like God must have the spirit and potency of God in unique measure. In Him the fulness of the divine grace has found a permanent abode and we can now rejoice in the love and kindness of God made known to us in Jesus and by Him. It was for these reasons that the Christians of former days gave Jesus the place of primacy in their lives. They arrived at their conclusions by the exercise of consecrated thought and by the energy of a redemptive experience. We cannot, however, rely merely on their triumphant verdicts. It certainly encourages us to know what honours were given to the blessed Saviour by previous generations. But it is imperative that we in turn should arrive at our own decisions, in view of the thinking and struggling and yearning after God of our own times.

Take a large view of the influence of Christ throughout the world and you will find how excellently fitted He is to lead men up the altar stairs to God. Those who have recently visited the Orient to study religious conditions there have brought back word that Jesus Christ is the only hopeful basis for a better Oriental civilisation. As we think of Western lands where the situation is one of tragic chaos at the present time we are compelled to acknowl-

edge that Jesus Christ is the only unifying force and redeeming influence of Occidental civilisation. The world, both East and West, most urgently and sorely needs Him. Time has wrought many changes in the course of the centuries. Ideas which at one time were accepted have now become out of date; arguments which were once powerful no longer convince; methods of work which were effective have lost their cunning to achieve results; in short, science and invention have made for us a new world. But Jesus is still the same. He continues to be the only satisfying and secure Saviour, and He is more deeply and widely appreciated to-day than ever before.

> "That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose."

There are different types of Christianity—philosophical, sacerdotal, mystical evangelical—but they all centre in Christ. In every age, from the times of the apostles, men have differed in questions of polity and policy. This is to be expected when we remember the divers traits, temperaments, and traditions of people. We learn from the book of Acts that among the first followers of Christ some suffered from national prejudices, others had religious scruples, and others again had a nar-

rowing outlook for the Gospel. But not one of them had the least doubt that Christ was supremely necessary and wholesomely effective for life and death and all things. They bore a direct relationship to Him. It was His commandments they obeyed, it was His honour they sought, it was His spirit of love they showed, it was His power to save from sin they advertised. No one bearing the name of Christian can depart from this noble standard. The modern Christian has his many denominations and his multiplying sects which are a weariness to the flesh and an embarrassment to the advance of the spiritual life and the spread of the truth, as it is in Jesus. But in spite of these unworthy divisions and through them there is seen the underlying unity of thought concerning the strong Saviourhood of Christ.

Wherever the vision of Jesus has been uncovered wonderful benefits have been obtained. This is witnessed to not only by the voice of the first century but also by the many-toned voices of twenty centuries which tell with joy and gladness that, "None but Christ can satisfy." Those who have been tempted and smitten by sin, those who have tried and failed in the struggle, those who have laboured and lost in the conflict, those who have given up hope and

are filled with despair, have heard Christ speaking to their souls and have stood up with new vigour and confidence and have taken up the tasks of life because He has redeemed their lives and given them a new start. Never has He disappointed any soul who came to Him in distress and sorrow: never has He cast aside any who lifted the eye of faith to Him; never has any returned empty-handed or dissatisfied from His enriching presence. They all confess gratefully and buoyantly that by the grace of Christ it has been possible to weather the storms and to survive the wreckage and to stand firm at their places of duty. This appeal of a many-sided experience from every age and clime is quite complete and final. Let us in like manner surrender to Christ and we also shall find that He is exceedingly precious.

This then is the glory of Christ. It is the glory of His character of perfect spirituality and oneness with God. It is the glory of His conquest over sin and death by the sacrifice on the cross. It is the glory of His concern for the redemption of the entire human race. It is the glory of His companionship with men in the straits and struggles of daily living. It is the glory of His coming crowning, when all nations and peoples will acknowledge Him Lord of all. God speed that day.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FACT OF REDEMPTION

"Let us not mistake the kindly fruits of the cross for the moral principle of it. The fruits will not give the principle, but the principle will give the fruits. And the more we are preoccupied with social righteousness so much the more we are driven to that center where the whole righteousness of God and man found consummation, and adjustment, and a power and a career, in the saving judgment of Christ's cross. Public liberty rests on inward freedom; and the cross alone gives moral freedom, and moral independence, to the mass of men, who were left to slavery even by the heroic moral aristocracy of stoicism. It is the cross that makes moral worth an infectious power, keeps character from being self-contained, and gives a moral guarantee of a steady social future. The cross is the spring, not of self-possessed and individualist righteousness, but of that creative and contagious goodness which makes possible the social state. Only at the center of the cross does the man find himself in his kind, and both in God. A creative, missionary, and social ethic springs only from religion; and it springs most from the religion which is able to clothe us with the power of the creative, loving, outgoing God."

—*P. T. Forsyth: "The Cruciality of the Cross," page 42.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE FACT OF REDEMPTION

IT is very noteworthy that the Cross is the outstanding symbol of Christianity. It thus speaks to the deepest desires and the profoundest purposes of humanity and gives expression to the distinctive message of the gospel. It is of little consequence that the cross was called the "key of the Nile" with which Osiris opened the fountains of the South and poured out the life-giving waters over the land. It is further of less significance that the cross was regarded as a synonym of infamy and dishonour by Roman and Jew because criminals were hung upon it and it was thus associated with lawlessness and iniquity. Since that dark hour on Calvary, when the Sacrifice was offered for the world's redemption, the cross has been transfigured and glorified for it quickens penitence and leads to holiness. In connection with this sublime symbol of our Faith recall some other distinctive symbols. The sword is the symbol of force and we associate it with Mohammedanism, whose sacred book, the Koran,

commends its use as a worthy weapon in the hands of the faithful. A book is the symbol of learning which we might associate with Confucianism, without at all endorsing the scholastic crudities of that backward system. A building is the sign of civilisation and of material advance. Christianity in the early centuries made its way, in spite of the imperial opposition of Rome, not by relying upon the sword but by trusting Christ to whom His followers were outspokenly consecrated. They did not have any book which they could offer to the sceptic or critic as a rational exposition of their faith, for the New Testament canon had not yet been formed. The Christians of that age had no separate buildings in which they could meet to worship Christ as God; they met in private homes, in forests and catacombs, and in many another undesirable because uncomfortable place. They, however, gave little thought to these external conditions because of the spirit of flaming devotion which inspired both their worship of Christ and their testimony to Christ. Indeed, in those days of unsurpassed Christian courage and invincible persistence, the Christ-filled character was more than the Christless circumstances. From that day down to the present it is the Cross of Christ which has spoken at once of heroic suf-

fering, unselfish sacrifice, and practical service, which has also stood forth as the impressive declaration of the gracious message of Christianity.

The New Testament shows what topic received conspicuous and central attention in the thought of the early Church. Fully one-third of the four Gospels is taken up with matters relating to the Passion. This was no doubt in response to the demand of the Church which was never tired of meditating with deep reverence and holy gratitude on the events which brought redemption. Nothing so gripped the heart and governed the motives and guided the lives of the Christians like the searching and saving truth of Christ and Him crucified. When they expressed their convictions it was in the form of eager ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving. The doxologies of the Book of Revelation, for instance, confess the Christian faith far more profoundly and accurately than even the discussions of Paul in the epistle to the Romans. Who are these praising God with such unanimity and heartiness of soul? "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7. 14). How did they achieve their signal victories? "And they overcame because of

the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death" (chap. 12. 11). How did they feel towards Christ? Their song expressed their testimony: "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us to be a Kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever" (chap. 1. 5). This same spirit of exultant gratulation is heard in the Apostle's confession: "But far be it for me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And there is not a writer of the New Testament but will heartily endorse it. We can therefore say that it is the Cross which gives distinction and distinctiveness to Christianity. It is not only its essential truth but its "organising idea," and is, in the words of Principal Fairbairn, "without any parallel in the ideas and customs either of those natural religions which make most of sacrifice, or of those which we are accustomed to compare with the Christian." It is, moreover, just this central theme of permanent interest and indispensable worth which, when accepted, clarifies the vision, makes unselfish the motives, enlarges the horizon, and commissions men to

carry the evangel of good tidings unto the uttermost parts of the earth, and to offer it to the human race, regardless of ethnic differences, national barriers, or religious animosities.

The unique speech of the Cross is that of sacrifice, even the self-sacrifice of God the Father in the person of "His only begotten Son," for the explicit purpose of destroying the fatal effects of sin. He was moved thereto by a love so profound that its ethical concern was as intense as the all-animating religious and spiritual determination. And how comprehensive is this love, seen in sympathy with distress, in succour of the needy, in suffering with the erring, in saving the sinner, and in sanctifying unto perfect righteousness and holiness of life and action. We thus think of the Cross as setting forth the persuasive principle not only of love divine but also of the life divine. The apostle knew how much this meant to him, for the redemptive deed of Christ had touched the deepest depths and the highest aspirations of his soul, and what he had experienced of satisfaction and joy was a blessing offered to all and urgently needed by all, that they may live in the spirit and power of the Cross. This gospel has never failed to recreate the individual and social conscience, to deepen the sense of

obligation, to rekindle the waning zeal of Christians, and to place before the Church an imperious vision of urgent and compelling duty.

So many-sided is the character of Christ that we can regard Him in several ways and honour Him for the opulence of His grace. But let us be careful that we do not confuse any partial aspects, however valuable, with that which is central and vitally supreme. A Christianity which holds up Christ as a Pattern, however symmetrical and complete in character; or which exalts Him as a martyr even though the noblest of them all; or which praises Him as a moralist of exceptionally high and exacting ethical standards; or which honours Him as a teacher with charm, wisdom and authority —a Christianity which does only these things appeals to the world as a humanitarian system, the best of its kind; but it falls far short of being the religion of full and far-reaching redemption. It is lacking in the Divine afflatus which has given holy courage, irresistible energy, the swing of conquest, and the experience of achievement so characteristic of those who have accepted the Divine-human Christ of the entire New Testament testimony. The lesser message has always proved to be ineffectual. It has no word of cheer to the despond-

ent, nor of peace to the disconsolate, nor of pardon to the distracted. The soul which has been lashed by sin and whose life has been scarred by evil passions and which is suffering from moral anæmia and a paralysed will surely needs something far more dynamic than wise counsels, gracious ideas, or beautiful sentiments. This necessary divine energy is obtained by men not at Bethlehem which tells of the Incarnation of Christ, nor at Capernaum which reminds us of His teaching, nor on Mt. Tabor which holds us in confusion as we witness the Transfiguration, but at Calvary, where the bleeding heart of the Son of God can stay our wounds and heal our sorrows and strengthen our purposes of righteousness and enable us to translate them into deeds which breathe the spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity, raised to the highest power. This experience is not only that of the first century; it belongs to all the Christian centuries. If we take the time to listen we can hear a vast multitude whom no man can number, speaking in their several languages and dialects, rejoicing in the knowledge that they have been brought out of darkness into light by the merits of Christ's redemption.

Take then a comprehensive view of the world's history and you will see a reflection of

the Cross of Christ wherever self-denial is practised, sacrifice experienced, benevolence exhibited, and enduring service rendered. The great missionary enterprise which has done so much for the backward races no less than for those which are more favoured has been advocated and sustained by those who were inspired by Christ and Him crucified, just as Paul himself had been. Christ without the crown of thorns is Anti-Christ, and Christianity without the cross is a shallow caricature. Such a perversion sits lightly to the pain and anguish and despair of life, and its optimism is a wretched mockery of the soul in trouble. "There are three steps in the Santa Scala which the race is slowly and painfully ascending: barbarism, where men cultivate the body; civilisation, where they cultivate the intellect; holiness, where they cultivate the soul. There is for the whole Race, for each nation, for every individual, the age of Homer, the age of Socrates, the age of Jesus. Beyond the age of Jesus nothing can be desired or imagined, for it runs on those lofty table-lands where the soul lives with God." And such fellowship is possible only for those who submit to "the culture of the cross," in the words of John Watson. The quotation recalls an incident in the life of Matthew Arnold. He attended service in the Sef-

ton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, and heard a sermon on the Cross of Christ by the minister, Dr. Watson, which deeply impressed him. One of the hymns sung was:

> "When I survey the wondrous Cross
> On which the Prince of Glory died."

Arnold returned to the home of his brother-in-law, and there repeated the lines, saying that the hymn was the finest in the language. "Yes," he added, "the Cross remaineth, and in the straits of the soul makes its ancient appeal." That afternoon he met with an accident which proved fatal.

There is nothing that can satisfy the deep instincts of the human spirit and remove the sense of spiritual emptiness like this message of the Cross which announces the rare grace and the wondrous goodness of God, and offers the tender sympathy, the generous love and the courageous confidence of Christ. The fact of the redemptive death of Christ is so comprehensive and catholic a truth that no single theory nor all the theories of the Atonement can adequately explain it. One of the pathetic aspects of the theological history of this doctrine has not been the keen dialectical skill shown by its exponents but rather their insistence that others should view this truth from

their particular angle of vision and should accept their interpretation as though it were final, on pain of being exiled from the pale of their fellowship. And the zeal in emphasising their theory has often manifested a spirit utterly foreign and even antagonistic to the fraternal gospel of the Cross. The more impressive exposition is that which is given in the lives of men and women who pass their days under the shadow of the Cross and who are controlled by its purifying and pervasive influence. During the Boxer rebellion in China the native Christians were not asked whether they were Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and the like. Their persecutors drew the figure of a cross on the ground and asked them: "Will you trample upon that?" Their refusal advertised their faith and loyalty. In comparison with this strategic test, our denominational distinctions have only a transitory value, however revered may be the associations which affectionately cling to them.

We might just as well quickly make up our minds that the pressing question of Christian union will not be solved by ecclesiastical courts of arbitration, nor merely by a better appreciation of each other's respective and distinctive contributions to the sum total of Christian thought and life, nor even by methods of com-

promise which tend to devitalise the intrinsic truth. It will be, if at all, effectively and securely done only as the respective parties of *approachment* exhibit the sacrificial and sanctifying spirit which we think of in connection with the Cross. This may involve the renouncing of cherished traditions which in the larger perspective are only of relative value and of provincial importance; but in their place there will come a sharing of the fulness of spiritual life to enrich the character. This will be a far greater advantage than the minor gains that may otherwise accrue to denominationalism. What is most urgently needed then is not a new theory of the Cross but repeated demonstrations of the practice of the Cross. This is equally needed for the solution of the hydra-headed social problem. When those who glory in the Cross have sensitised consciences they will be willing to take a fearless stand on behalf of economic readjustments, the industrial regeneration of society, and the outspoken expulsion of social iniquity. And this they will do although it may require the sacrifice of position, wealth and even life. If Christ ended on Calvary because His prophetic protests against entrenched evils were resented, it surely cannot be expected that His followers will escape censure and perchance the loss of all things,

even life. But such a prospect has not been disheartening or terrifying to the sworn comrades of the Cross. They have been able to say after the noble Apostle: "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20. 24). The saints, prophets, and martyrs of all the centuries would endorse this determination as expressive of their single aim as the servants of Christ. It may be a refined form of selfishness to cling to the Cross, said one, but that which is more imperative and beneficial is to carry the Cross and boldly and fearlessly to submit to renunciation for the redemption of the individual, society and the world. In this consideration, we cannot avoid a reference to the war. We are optimistic enough to believe that a bigger and better Europe will come out of this world conflict, and that the inevitable sufferings will make clearer the ideas of the higher nationalism and internationalism, which will be established on a basis of faith and fraternalism. The spirit of the Cross with its redemptive passion will then come to its own. If we would hasten that blessed day, we should be able to say with the blind poet-preacher

Matheson who learned in suffering what he taught in song:

"O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CHRISTIAN'S INSPIRATION

"Where men believe that an ordinary human being can be temporarily transformed by the presence within him of a spirit, the very belief produces its own evidence. If the tenet of the holy spirit rested on nothing else, it would have filled a smaller place in Christian thought. But when Paul speaks of the holy spirit whereby the Christians are sealed, calling it now the spirit of God and now the spirit of Jesus, he is referring to a profounder experience. Explain conversion as we may, the word represents a real thing. Men were changed, and were conscious of it. Old desires passed away and a new life began, in which passion took a new direction, finding its center of warmth and light, not in morality, not in religion, but in God as revealed in Jesus Christ. 'To me to live is Christ,' cried Paul, giving words to the experience of countless others. Life had a new center; and duty, pain and death were turned to gladness. The early Christian was conscious of a new spirit within him. It was by this spirit that they could cry 'Abba, Father'; it was the spirit that guided them into all truth; it was the spirit that united them to God, that set them free from the law of sin and death, that meant life and peace and joy and holiness."

—*T. R. Glover: "The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire," page 150.*

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHRISTIAN'S INSPIRATION

THERE was a swift turn in the tide of affairs, dramatic in its suddenness, in the experience of the disciples three days after the crucifixion. This change was intensified after the day of Pentecost. Men who were fearful and timid in the presence of ecclesiastical dignitaries and civil authorities assumed a courageous attitude. They now had nothing for which to apologise but something valuable to announce. They spoke in a positive spirit, they acted in a decisive manner, they exercised a most stimulating influence, favourable and unfavourable, on those who heard them. What was the cause of this radical difference by which men went from one extreme of fearfulness and anxiety to the opposite of fearlessness and confidence? How did it come to pass that a man like Peter who denied his Master when he was challenged by a servant girl subsequently, when he was threatened by the religious leaders of Jerusalem answered boldly and showed that he could not be af-

frighted into subservience? Why did a man like Stephen allow himself to be stoned to death, and others expose themselves to persecution and privation so much so that they were driven away from home and friends? These questions demand an answer as soon as we turn over the pages of the New Testament.

The accepted explanation of the Church is more satisfactory than many of the hypothetical surmises of a superficial rationalism. The disciples were brought out of darkness into light through Christ's stupendous victory over death. They did not at once realise how remarkable was the achievement. At first they doubted the gladsome assurance and even hesitated to receive the risen Christ. It was only to a few that his spiritualised presence was more real and intense than in the days of his flesh. Many of the doubts, confusions and uncertainties were, however, set at rest after the Pentecostal outpouring, when they were filled with the Holy Spirit and received a moral and spiritual empowerment which gave them surprising unity and stability in the face of the severest odds.

Let us briefly consider the facts relating to the day of Pentecost. The disciples had seen their risen Lord and Master, but no longer was He with them, and yet He had promised to re-

turn with greater spiritual power. This was the memorable event which they were expecting in the Upper Room. As usual Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims from all parts of the empire, who had come to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, and there was a look of eager expectancy on all faces. On the morning of the day of celebration these hopes of their fellow-countrymen were shared by the disciples of Jesus only in an intenser and more fervent form. It is very likely that the offering of the first fruits at Pentecost led them to conclude that the event of epochal importance was nigh. They were all united in the fellowship of faith, hope and love; their souls were stirred by the enthusiasm of expectation; they were in a receptive mood for the Spirit of the Highest to come upon them and take controlling possession of them. The strategic hour had at last struck and the fulfilment of the ancient promises was about to be accomplished. Fire is one of the symbols of the divine presence; the wind is a symbol of the divine operations; and the tongue is the medium of speech and communication. How vivid and picturesque is the description of the Pentecostal experience of these disciples! The doors and windows of their spirits were thrown wide open and there came in the Spirit of the Holy God and of the living

Christ. The welcome meeting of human and divine was a rousing one, startling in its effects, verging on the sensational, as it certainly was spectacular and demonstrative in its manifestations.

Far more important than the outward exhibitions was the clear assurance that the blessed Master had kept His word and had come back to them with spiritual glory and fulness to abide with them for ever. No longer then would they be helpless and alone but they would have this gracious presence from whom they need be never separated as long as they show the loyalty of love. Theirs would also be the wonderful privilege of guidance at the cross roads, of courage before threatening fears, of advance in the face of subtle opposition. Indeed they would be equipped for every need, and if their spirits would only keep in tune with the Infinite there will be absolutely no demand for which a supply would not be forthcoming. It was in the strength of this experience which grew from more to more that the disciples performed the work which is recorded of them in the Acts. They were not only made aware of the reality of the spiritual presence of Him who had said, "Lo, I am with you alway"; but they also confessed their faith

in the winning words, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." In Mark's Gospel, there is a concise summary of the life and work of the early Church: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed."

The history of the Church offers a series of most remarkable illustrations how the living Christ has been at work through the centuries. He has brought men into fellowship with God and given them the vision of the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty, and the thrilling experience of the forgiveness of sins. He has imparted strength when the pressure of temptation was severe, when the oppression of enmity was intense, when the bitterness of failure was galling, when the darkness of discouragement was terrifying. Yes, when these saints have not known which way to turn and had come up against a blank wall and were on the point of giving up in despair, then they heard the voice of cheer speaking to them, and they felt the touch of power stimulating them, and they stood up with boldness and courage to encounter danger and trial with the assurance that they would be more than conquerors through Him who loved them.

"Whoso hath felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt him nor deny:
Yea with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

Herein is the distinctively unique feature of Christianity. The relation that exists between the living Christ and his followers is vital, direct and inseparable. Whatever the Christian is or may be he attributes to the grace of God mediated through the divine Spirit. The more he advances in insight and understanding and the maturer this experience becomes, he finds that intercourse is indispensable with the Heavenly Father who is the source of life and with the Holy Saviour who is the giver of redemption. In this way alone can the separate threads of life be gathered up and therewith be woven a rich fabric of character to adorn the palace of the King for ever. As the Buddhist becomes more deeply initiated into the teachings of Gautama he can assert his independence of his teacher. But at no time can the Christian dispense with the vital companionship of Christ who is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega of every believer, who has given Him the place of primacy in thought and devotion and service. Through age after age and in successive generations Christ has

shown His sympathetic power to satisfy all needs:

> "In every condition—in sickness, in health,
> In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth."

He has done this in the power of the blessed Holy Spirit who has time and again taken of the things of Christ and shown them unto those who have surrendered themselves to His motions and goings. Think of the illumination of mind which has enabled the Church to interpret life anew and with an accent peculiarly suited to the demands of each separate generation and nation. The appeal has always been made to the many-sided character of Christ, and peoples of divers temperaments and traditions have made Him the test by which they have regulated their activities. Those who look with disapproval upon the pleasures of life and frown upon enjoyment and who believe that perfection is attainable through cloistered seclusion have appealed to Him for support; and yet we do not think of Him as the ascetic Christ. Others who rejoice in the ministry of art and make of beauty and harmony a religious cult, and fawn on dilettantism in art and culture have also quoted Him; but we do not therefore conclude that He is the æsthetic Christ. He is indeed very much more. Let us say that He is

the catholic Christ, the universal and comprehensive Christ, who responds to the quest of the soul whatever its peculiar necessities may be. Through Him we can understand the comforting truth of the Fatherhood of God and the supplementary truth of the Brotherhood of man. As He interprets God to man and man to himself and men to each other, men find peace and joy in believing, in an atmosphere which is suffused with a celestial light. All this is without doubt the work of the Holy Spirit in and through those who have intelligently and openly and withal courageously entered the doors which have led into wider and more fruitful fields of service.

The Church has never followed stereotyped methods of work. Some leaders have been prone to conclude that the voice of the past must literally control the decisions of the present. This short-sighted outlook has been frequently set aside by the over-ruling Providence of God. The *backward* look spells cowardice, for it means that we hesitate to fight new conditions. The *downward* look expresses guilt and it implies that we are afraid to look squarely at the facts. It is the *upward and forward* look which always breathes courage. We believe in the Holy Ghost, in the present inspirations of God, and so we hold that to-day

is as much alive with God as any yesterday. We are also optimistic enough to persuade ourselves that to-morrow will be yet more full of God than any other time in the history of the world.

In the early centuries the Christians did not hesitate to appropriate the best in the pagan faiths and cults and to give to these borrowed contributions an enrichment possible only to the religion of the Incarnate Christ. Feasts and ceremonies as well as temples and customs were baptised into Christianity and the result, with some few exceptions, was healthy. This was done under the conviction that God was witnessing through the upward yearnings and strivings of the human soul, whatever the avenues may be or however they may be described or named. The testimony of the mystics has often been set at naught by the organised Church during the periods when there was a dearth of spiritual energy and illumination, and when it seemed as though the Church relied on temporalities which are seen and not on spiritualities which are not seen. And at such times the light of life was shining more clearly in the midst of the loyal souls who were discounted than of the Church which had discredited itself by spiritual emptiness. These bold initiates, who were ostracised, confessed

that they were in vital and direct communion with God and that this depended not on outward circumstances but on character. They did not believe in "a departmental Deity" whose interests are circumscribed and whose supreme concern is in questions of ecclesiastical millinery, as though rubrics and ritual were the vital issues. It is true that these mystics, in their endeavour to emphasise spiritual values, overlooked the intellectual aspects and were inclined to belittle everything that did not pertain exclusively to the major theme. This has also been one of the weaknesses of the evangelical school. Those who were religious had no interest in art or music or literature or science which, according to them, are of the world worldly. This theory prevailed in spite of the facts that Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God to devise cunning works in gold, silver, and brass for the ancient tabernacle, and that in both the Old and the New Testaments the glory of God is celebrated in the beauty and majesty of Nature. It is worth recalling that congregational singing came into use since Protestantism and that up to within recent times the presence of an organ in the church was regarded as a blasphemous intrusion. All this is significant of much.

The larger views which now prevail on these

and other subjects can surely be ascribed to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. We can also see the promise of Christ fulfilled as men devoted to His interests have gone forth into the mission field to carry out His programme of world-wide redemption. The missionaries have been among the seers of the Church, and many of their conclusions, which were reached in the course of practical service, have already reacted on the Church at home. For instance, the movement for Christian unity and federation received its first impetus from the foreign field. Confronted by hoary superstitions and venerable religions, the missionaries felt that the only way they could overtake the tremendous opposition and overcome the gigantic difficulties was by unifying their forces, not in the name of any Occidental denomination but in the name of the one and only Christ, whose Spirit was assuredly illuminating their understanding, purifying their vision, enlarging their horizon, and compelling them to see the folly and futility of sectarianism. As the Church engages more enthusiastically in missionary effort and does more to sustain its loyal representatives abroad, there will be a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit which shall break down barriers, remove provincialism, expose sectarian delusions, and reduce to

the vanishing point all narrowness and bigotry. Thus only shall Christ become all and in all.

Although modern civilisation has received a rude shock by the calamitous war, and many conclusions have thereby been nullified, we must nevertheless acknowledge that it is the divine-human figure of Jesus Christ which is occupying the horizon of the world. Whatever differences may separate Christian people, they are at one in confessing their allegiance to Christ. It is this truth of a Unifying Christ that we need to proclaim in order that East and West may meet in hearty and happy accord and mutually emulate each other to offer Him grateful adoration in the most expressive language of goodness and love. The testimony of the centuries to the sufficiency of Christ is overwhelming, but it is only in these recent years that the voice of the Spirit has been heard urging the Church to realise that in Christ an irresistible argument is offered and a compelling appeal is made, not merely for tolerance but for appreciation of each other's differences, for amalgamation in fundamentals and for adaptation as to non-essentials.

It has been demonstrated that Christ in the power of the Spirit continues the companion of the lonely hour, the comforter in the sad hour, the helper of the weak, the guide of the erring,

the light of the weary, the Saviour divine of all who trust Him. The convincing test of a Christian is not his churchmanship but his Christianity. By this is meant his Christian experience in a life of surrender to Christ, of sympathy with Christ, of service for Christ, and of confidence in His ultimate triumph from shore to shore, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

"Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all!
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold!
Rend each man's temple veil and bid it fall
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in!

"Gather us in! we worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In divers forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek One Spirit land;
Gather us in!"

CHAPTER FIVE: THE APPEAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

"Why then art thou afraid to take up thy cross, which leads to a kingdom?

In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is the protection from thy enemies.

The cross is an infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit.

In the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

Take up thy cross then and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He is gone before thee, carrying His cross, and He died for thee upon the cross, that thou mayest also bear thy cross, and love to die on the cross.

Because if thou be dead with Christ, thou shalt also live with Him; and if thou hast been His partner in the suffering, so shalt thou also be in the glory."

—Thomas à Kempis: "Of the Imitation of Christ." Book II., chap. 12. 2.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE APPEAL OF DISCIPLESHIP

JESUS was more anxious to have a choice following than a large following of disciples. He was never impressed by the argument of numbers. He rather insisted that those who identified themselves with Him should he in hearty sympathy with His programme, for that would imply that they were willing to pay the full price of discipleship. A scribe was once stirred into enthusiasm and quickly offered himself; but Jesus knew that he had not counted the cost and so He turned down this impulsive soul and urged him to reconsider whether he would be willing to follow One who had not where to lay His head (Matt. 8. 20). Another offered his services but he was not as whole-souled; he only declared his intentions, but Jesus told him not to delude himself with good purposes but promptly to translate them into action, for, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9. 62). Jesus met yet another who was full of promise and

He urged him to enter the ranks right away; but he excused himself because he had not fully made up his mind. How like many a person to-day who vacillates and prevaricates and never makes a final decision. Start out at once "in scorn of consequence," and let the future open up of its own accord (Matt. 8. 22). The impulsive, the hesitant, the double-minded are of no use and Jesus did not look for recruits from them.

It may seem as though the Master was too exacting and that He was expecting too much at the very outset. Would it not have been better to lead them by slow stages so that they might get used to the new demands before surrendering to them? Such a policy would have led to His claims being misunderstood, and many might have been tempted to compromise and go half-way in their allegiance. Indeed this turned out to be the case in spite of the high standards that were held up. The results were disappointing as with those who fell away in Galilee because they could not accept the hard sayings, as they called them. Jesus well knew the lurking evil in the human heart. He saw that wickedness was powerful and that it had established itself everywhere. Proofs of the demonic display of sin were found on all hands. The only way to overcome and destroy

this hydra-headed enemy of man is to put up a stiff and open fight and show no quarter whatever. The heroic temper is needed for the valiant effort which will produce the virtuous deed and make for the conquering life. It is not by following the line of least resistance nor by taking counsel with ease that any victory has ever been won on the battlefield of the soul. The very fact that Jesus made the appeal to the instincts of courage latent in the human breast shows that He knew what man is capable of when the right sort of pressure is exercised.

The great end of life is to develop personality. The commercial tests of success are not only superficial but are also morally poisonous. Many young people have the idea that the god of getting-on is the only god to whom worship can be profitably offered. This is a species of short-sightedness which urges that the course of education should be retrenched and that the pupils should be taken through an abbreviated curriculum, with the sole purpose of helping them to make a living. Many people seem to forget that mental discipline has a bearing on moral discipline and that time is not lost but rather gained when more time is spent in school. It has thus often enabled the student to find himself and be better equipped

to do a full and satisfactory share of the tasks of life. This is nothing but the spirit of allegiance to the best. The real culture of the soul also implies restraint, without which the principle of self-development may work self-destruction so far as the noblest qualities are concerned. We get only as we give; we prosper only as we surrender; we conquer according as we suffer; we truly win only as we follow the rules of the game.

The spirit of submission to the highest ideal with all that is included of sacrifice is repeatedly inculcated by Jesus. There is absolutely no other way of becoming a Christian disciple and attaining to perfection. A better word than sacrifice would be consecration because it has an affirmative note. The follower of Jesus is not expected merely to exhibit passive virtues as though he were a negative character. There are also positive traits which make for stalwart manhood and earnest womanhood which are even more distinctive of Christianity. It is a call of devotion to the ideal of duty as exemplified and sanctified by Jesus Christ. And the response to this upward pull imparts the thrill of inspiration and the joy of satisfaction, beside which all lesser good is of small value.

Duty is that which is due from us and which

we must perform. It brings before us not only obligation and responsibility but also privilege and benefit. None of the warring peoples of Europe are thinking of sacrifice where the interests of their respective countries are concerned. Young girls with the charm and purity of youth have been shot down as spies. Women have gladly given their sons to fight for home and country, even though it meant death. Men have gone to the front and thousands are in training for the summons which will take them to the danger and death zones, but there has been no hesitation in their consecration on the altars of patriotism. One result is that throughout the countries of Europe a feeling of solemnity prevails as they realise how serious are the issues of this fearful conflict. A further consequence is that some of the finest elements of character which have lain submerged beneath material interests have been roused and have come to the surface. Everywhere it is being increasingly recognised that the real worth of life does not consist in outward possessions but in those eternal enrichments of the soul which neither moth nor rust can consume and where thieves cannot break through and steal.

The summons of Jesus, be it further noted, is never to self-mutilation but always to self-

enlargement and self-ennoblement. Recall the names of some of his faithful followers and you will see that because they stood firmly and unflinchingly upon the rock of Christian duty they had a cheerful spirit and a hopeful outlook, and were confident of the ultimate triumphs of the Kingdom of God and the growing influence of the Church. They did not shirk their work nor did they offer the hireling's plea but they kept their hand on the plough with unswerving determination and they gloriously achieved. They did not delude themselves by thinking that appearances were deceptive and that the trials and difficulties were not half as serious as they threatened to be. They were in earnest because they were honest and they did not draw back for a single moment; but with steadfast eye they reached forth unto the prize of their high calling and became worthy of Him who had brought them out of darkness into his marvellous light. The New Testament has been well called the most joyous book in all literature; and yet it was written by men who knew the bitterness of privation and persecution for the sake of the name. They, however, took joyfully the spoiling of their possessions, knowing that they assuredly had a better possession and an abiding one.

These eager spirits of a former day responded so readily because they had made Christ central in their lives. If they were called on to renounce much it was in order that they may receive yet more of what was vitally indispensable. The programme that was spread before Paul suggested anything but ease: "I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9. 16). He was not affrighted by the dangers but accepted his task in the spirit of Christian heroism and continued through stripes and prisons and stonings and shipwrecks and perils abundant for the sake of Christ and the Church. This has been equally true of all who have witnessed a good confession in strong martyr fashion. Think of Wycliffe, the pioneer of Protestantism, of John Hus, of Jerome of Prague, of Dante well described as "the Mediæval Synthesis," of Savonarola, of John Knox the indomitable, of Martin Luther the fearless, of Calvin and Wesley and Carey and Asbury and Coke and Livingstone, and ever so many burning lights which shone with the splendour of heaven, in conspicuous and obscure places and who dispelled the midnight darkness of earth. Representatives of this magnificent spirit have been found in every age. Among them are the missionaries who have gone forth

to evangelise the world. It is not surprising that the temples of paganism have shaken to their foundations, that vices and sins which were cursing human lives loosened their deadly grip, and that souls who were in despair were ransomed from spiritual peril. It may be interesting to bring together some testimonies which give memorable expression to this spirit of courageous consecration. David Brainerd said: "I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ." John Mason Peck, one of the early Western pioneers, declared, "I have now put my hands to the plough! O Lord, may I never turn back. I feel a most heavenly joy when my heart is engaged in this work."

Thank God, the fires of martyr sacrifice and service are still burning upon the altars of the Church. It was only in June, 1911, that an extraordinary demonstration took place in Philadelphia at the Baptist World Alliance. The Russian delegates wore the badges of scars on their persons on account of their faith. Simon Stepanoff twice narrowly escaped death: during the first year of his conversion, he had frequently been imprisoned and had spent five years in Siberia; he had also baptised one thousand Cossacks in Astrakhan. Andreas

Estratenko was two years in prison, had often been beaten and fined for preaching, and in Siberia had baptised two thousand persons, many of whom had travelled over one hundred and eighty miles for this purpose. Versilia Ivanoff had been twice exiled and kept in thirty-one different prisons. Feodor Kostromin had spent sixteen years in exile and nine years in prison, and during his imprisonment fifty criminals were converted. What a record just from one country. The remarkable thing is that in every land there have been men and women who could not be bought to betray their Lord and Master and who preferred death rather than denial. As long as this continues to be the case the Church of the living God will be invincible and the gates of hell will never prevail against it.

It is true that there is a certain austerity in Christianity. It has not been popular but it is spiritually healthy. Those who look for a comfortable religion that makes holiness easy and spirituality entertaining cannot find it in the gospel of Christ. Everywhere and every time He challenges His followers in a way that drives out all sluggish and sinister motives from their hearts. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." These words were spoken

when Peter tried to interfere with the settled purpose of the Master. The thought of intense suffering as the condition of fruitful fidelity was repulsive to the nature of this impulsive disciple, but he was directly checked, for such a view of life was foreign to the view of Jesus. Self-denial means the curbing and the cutting out of the passions and the appetites, and dethroning "the tyrannous dominion of self." We thus confess that Christ has the right of way. This is a purely voluntary act but it must be done if we would have Christlikeness of character. We take up the cross when we perform duties which may be disagreeable but which are, nevertheless, necessary. One cannot help feeling that the Puritan, with all of his so-called narrowness, was nearer the truth of things than his captious critic, the lax Churchman, who was liberal but also frivolous. It was the seriousness of Jesus that offended His enemies. He did not have a morbid and melancholy temperament and there was absolutely nothing of the monastic in Him. St. Simeon Stylites of the pillar fame and St. Anthony of the desert and others like them, both men and women, were governed by false and distorted ideals of life. Monasticism, pagan no less than Christian, has failed because of its abnormal, anti-social and anti-human outlook.

Jesus had none of this. His accurate sense of the values of life led Him to conclude that moral and spiritual worth cannot be obtained except as we count the cost and pay the price.

We cannot explain away the severe features of Christianity and retain that which has always been distinctive of it. It is easy enough to have the cross on the steeple of the church, but it is a far more beautiful thing, when the cross is seen in the heart of the church member, giving motive and momentum to his entire life. And until it is seen more frequently and more largely we shall never make much headway against the forces of darkness, which threaten to destroy our spiritual vitality. Why is it that a leading teacher of the Roman Catholic Church like Père Gratry, who cannot be accused of prejudice, should have so sorry an opinion of Protestantism, as the following will indicate: "Protestantism is in essence the abolition of sacrifice. To abolish mortification, abstinence, and fasting; to abolish the necessity of good works, effort, struggle, virtue; to shut up sacrifice in Jesus alone and not let it pass to us; no more to say as St. Paul did, I fill up that which is wanting in the sufferings of Christ, but rather to say to Jesus on the Cross, 'Suffer alone, O Lord'; there is Protestant-

ism."* At the first blush we may be ready to resent this charge as though it were a libelous exaggeration. But there is an element of truth underlying this criticism, whatever may be the differences in our relative conceptions of sacrifice. Are there not many who sing the first line of the hymn: "Jesus paid it all"; but who have not caught the practical sense of the next line: "All to him I owe"? Some one has well said that we must guard against the peril of Church membership without obligation. There is a constant danger whenever the Christian ideal fails to control the vision and the will of the disciple of Jesus.

The central feature of this ideal has to do with the cross and whoever tries to get rid of it will have an emasculated and perverted form of Christianity which cannot capture the idealism of youth nor give tone to the dreams of old age. There is far too much of cant and claptrap about attracting young people by offering them a religious experience which effervesces and which cannot endure in the presence of hard tests and exacting claims. Let us be careful that we do not turn out religious milksops who know nothing of moral enthusiasm, of holy passion, of virile courage, of sublime

* I am indebted to an article by Principal Denney in *The British Weekly* for this quotation.

steadfastness which have always been the marks of a militant and puissant Christianity. The gist of the whole matter, so far as real Christian living is concerned, consists of love for Jesus Christ and loyalty to Him. If this spirit were carried into all our vocations and avocations of life, it would help solve the industrial and social problems, and give a new motive to national and international relationships, and make more persuasive the principle of brotherhood. Then shall begin the new era of concern for each other's welfare, consideration for each other's rights, and co-operation with each other in establishing the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

"Lead on, O King Eternal,
Till sin's fierce war shall cease,
And holiness shall whisper
The sweet Amen of peace;
For not with swords loud clashing
Nor roll of stirring drums;
With deeds of love and mercy,
The heavenly Kingdom comes."

CHAPTER SIX: THE PRACTICE OF BROTHERHOOD

"Love has received various definitions in the speech of men, corresponding to their various experiences with it. Sometimes it has been a sentiment of the mind, and sometimes a selfish human desiring; sometimes an ardent approval, or a hunger for possession, or a fellowship of the heart; sometimes a passion of delight. But he who has set love in the highest place has defined it at the highest, showing us that at heart it is a passion for doing good, a self-forgetful impulse of redemption, in imitation of God and fellowship with him. This, which is the passion of God, is appointed to be the passion of his children. This is his ideal of human character. When this ideal is realised, the finest ethical grace becomes the very life-breath of religion, while divine religion is the breath of the finest ethical life in man."

—William Newton Clarke: "The Ideal of Jesus," page 138.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRACTICE OF BROTHERHOOD

THE Hymn of Heavenly Love in First Corinthians, chapter thirteen, is the finest interpretation of Christianity expressed in terms of practical life. With it may be compared the words of Isaiah which Jesus read in the synagogue of Nazareth when he announced that the new era of Messianic blessedness had at last dawned. Then turn to the tender message of Jesus to the despondent Baptist in the dungeon of Machaerus. These three utterances express the unique genius of Christianity. Its crowning virtue is that of love which easily surpasses and supersedes the glory of scholarship, the greatness of wealth, the splendour of position, the magnificence of worldly pomp, and whatever else may be regarded as among the desirable prizes of life.

It is not surprising that Jesus was rejected at Nazareth and later by the nation. It only proves conclusively the alarming extent of their spiritual dulness. We need not, however, pass wholesale judgment on them because, as a mat-

ter of fact, no nation has acknowledged the supremacy of Jesus in the administration of its own affairs or in its dealings with other nations. None of the warring peoples of Europe have clean hands. Read the history of European diplomacy, as shown for instance in "The Memoirs of Francesco Crispi," the Italian statesman, and it can be seen that international policies have been regulated by the pagan ethics of refined selfishness and oftentimes by principles which even paganism would disown and discredit. In the light of these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that modern civilisation should so tragically have "rattled back to barbarism," to use the pungent words of Lord Rosebery. Those who have hastily concluded that the demonic displays of brutality since August, 1914, demonstrate the absolute inefficiency of Christianity must think again and take back their gratuitous criticism.

The message of Jesus Christ is primarily to the individual. It is not to him exclusively but in his relations with others. The individualism of Christianity has thus always inspired the spirit of fraternalism with intent to share its benefits with all humanity. It is through the individual and the co-operation of like-minded and like-spirited individuals that the leaven of Christian truth and influence has spread from

land to land, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. This is yet taking place. Think of John G. Paton going to the New Hebrides. After years of labour without any tangible results he finally won his first convert. The enthusiasm of this native Christian led him to exercise an influence on his neighbours and so the converts increased. In the spiritual world the increase is not by addition but by multiplication. The new man in Christ develops a new manhood and as he grows in character others follow in his steps and in time the wilderness of paganism is changed into a garden of fair and fragrant roses. This blessed result is obtained by the intensive testimony and the extensive influence of the thoroughly consecrated person.

The Christian is the "light of the world," shedding forth the enlightening knowledge concerning God, man and duty. He is the "salt of the earth," and by the purity of his presence he introduces elements that make for truth and righteousness. He is the leaven and his influence permeates throughout all the strata of society. All these figures of speech have reference to social relations. It is thus very evident that the Christian does not live unto himself but for others. His supreme concern is not to flee from the world and speedily enter heaven.

That is of the essence of selfishness and there is nothing in the New Testament which lends support to such an abnormal and unhealthy view of life. Buddhism encourages renunciation from society but Christianity insists on the regeneration of society. The ideal Christian is not of the world as to its ungodly motives and methods, but he is *in* the world and remains therein to testify to the ennobling way of life. It was that branch of the Evangelical school which made so much of other-worldiness which also stamped out slavery from the British Empire and laboured for the improvement of prisons and the opening of hospitals and engaged in other philanthropic activities. The Clapham Sect may be called reactionaries in theology but in this body of Christians were such noble men of God like Clarkson, Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, whose services brought honour to the name of Christ and blessings to the needy world. They were idealists in that they drew their inspiration from heaven but they were free from sentimentalism because they recognised the evils and worked incessantly to correct the wrongs that infested society.

There is then nothing anæmic in the spirit of the Christian nor is he introspective and morbid, nor even sentimental and erratic. He is the only one who is sane in the midst of the

multitudes who are rushing along with headlong recklessness and pitiable short-sightedness, having no thought of the unseen realities which are both satisfying and eternal. His first business is to grow a character in harmony with the gracious ideal in Christ; but he finds that this cannot be satisfactorily performed unless he considers the social nexus which binds him to his fellows. Indeed the exercise of altruistic impulses reflects on his own life to the extent that his character develops in proportion as he helps to improve the conditions which shall make truth, righteousness and goodness more practicable in the world. It cannot be otherwise if the Christian realises his stewardship in the name of his Master who said of Himself: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."

One of the first messages of Jesus was the announcement that the Kingdom of God is at hand. The reference is to the reign of God over the lives of individuals who are devoted to the moral and spiritual ideals made known by Jesus Christ. They are known by their sane and fraternal attitude to life. Their influence is always exerted on behalf of co-operation as against competition; their purpose is to further the all-round welfare of mankind; and

their conviction is that most assuredly the leaven of grace and love will continue working until the whole earth shall be filled with purity and peace. Those who adopt this programme are found in every land, and they fraternise with each other despite the differences of nationality, tradition and custom. They breathe a spiritual atmosphere which gives breadth and largeness of vision. For it is like the mountain air which far exceeds in health and exuberance that of the marshy plain. The members of the Kingdom of God constantly offer the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"; and they are ever impelled by the spirit of love to God and love to men. In the words of Principal A. M. Fairbairn: "Love to one's neighbour is but active and applied love to God." This is thus none other than a divine-human society, a united Brotherhood, which is inclusive of a sisterhood, for both men and women subscribe to the covenant which commits them to labour for the establishment of righteousness and peace and joy in a spirit of holiness. It further implies a recognition that every person—man, woman and child—has a right to live a full life, unhampered by the restrictions imposed by vested privilege; and that every one is also entitled to the service of every other one in a mutual compact, as far as in each

one lies, to lessen the burdens, to mitigate the trials, to ease the strain, to remove the temptations, and so make life better worth living.

It has therefore come to pass that wherever the Gospel of Jesus has been taken, it has proved itself to be the most effective instrument in illuminating the understanding, in purifying the heart, and in elevating the standards of those who accept its pervasive and progressive ideals. This is because the Gospel is a living dynamic. It is the influence of a person and not of a programme which has imparted new motives and kindled love and stirred enthusiastic desires, so that devoted men and women have gone forth and produced revolutionary changes in the world. The supreme example of Christ has been a constant inspiration. His message of the universal Fatherhood of God and its complementary message of the universal Brotherhood of man have given the death blow to the theory and practice of social privilege, class superiority and caste tyranny. Well may Lord Morley have said in his "Life of Gladstone," that in the teaching of Jesus, "many secret elements of social volcano slumber."

It is not possible to understand the progress of these nineteen centuries without seriously reckoning with Christianity as a redemptive

fact of far-reaching importance in the life of all the peoples of the world. Great and urgent reforms have been executed under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ. Turn over the pages of "Christian Missions and Social Progress," by the Rev. James S. Dennis, and you will find in these three large octavo volumes a mass of information which demonstrates from actual facts that the Gospel of Christ has fulfilled a universal mission which is merciful in spirit, optimistic in outlook, cosmopolitan in purpose, splendid in achievement, and opulently prophetic of yet more beneficent deeds in the future. We are learning that it is not enough to war against the evil and bring relief to those who are in distress. It is far better so to constitute the social order that surgical methods of reform will become superfluous. Discontinue the exploitation of human life for commercial gain; make more of the spiritual than of the merely economic values of life; realise our responsibility to the extent that we feel guilty in common with the transgressor who might have been different if he had a better environment; recognise the fact of fraternity and that we all are custodians of the interests of our brothers and sisters in the name of Christ; lose no opportunity to help every agency that is working for healthier childhood,

cleaner youth, finer womanhood, and stronger manhood. The results will then be beneficial to all classes of society so as to make also for national welfare and for the establishment of a federation of nations, when war and its infernal progeny shall be no more.

We are indeed aware that the dangers which beset our modern life are serious. Think of drunkenness, gambling, lust, crime, unsanitary and unmoral conditions in the tenements, the physical, ethical and religious impairments caused by child-labour and the employment of women under sweat-shop conditions. Add to all this the tyrannies of trusts as well as of labour unions, the political corruptions, the temptations to which girls are exposed in offices and stores, the ravages of white slavery and of the white plague, and we may well become discouraged as we contemplate the appalling situation. But let us remember that equally stern difficulties were mastered and overcome in the name of Christ by His faithful servants of a former day. Let us furthermore remember that we are not called upon to right the wrongs of the universe but to attend to the duties nearest home and to be faithful to our own opportunities.

One of the pressing requirements made of every Christian is that he should know what

he is talking about. It has often happened that many social agitations have suffered from sentimental exaggerations which have failed accurately to diagnose the causes of the evil and have consequently suggested remedial measures which are absolutely futile. We cannot depend on any ready-made panaceas. What may suit one age is wholly unsuitable to a later age, and what may have been effective in one community or people is altogether out of place in another. "New times demand new measures and new men;" and underlying this is the imperative summons for an adequate vision of the new needs. The industrial, political and national situation of our day is of a different complexion to that of the last century, yea, of the last few years. Dean George Hodges strikingly remarked that, "The characteristic symbol of this generation is the question-mark. Our patron saint is the sphinx." We cannot then face conditions by burying our head in the sands like the ostrich, but should be fearless and open-eyed like the eagle as it soars upwards in its majestic flight. Christianity is equal to every emergency and the spirit of Christ offers present illumination to His followers, in order that they may give an interpretation of life which is broad and deep and therefore adequate, offering solutions which

look towards a reconstruction of individual and social life on a basis of love and justice.

We look again to the mission field for an illustration because there we can see what radical changes have been effected by the Gospel of redemption. In 1894 a sailing vessel was drifting landwards in a dangerous sea off the east coast of Formosa. The native pastor of the village hastily beat a drum and summoned the villagers who were organised into a rescue party. Some of them were sent to inform the crew that there were no savages on the island and that if they land the chapel would be placed at their disposal. That evening twenty-one Europeans and Americans met one hundred and forty-six converts for a service of thanksgiving in the mission chapel. This native pastor was the first convert of Dr. MacKay, who wrote concerning this incident, "Note well that twenty-five years ago that crew would have been murdered, the vessel plundered, and no one left to tell the tale." * Christianity stands everywhere and at all times for the mending and making of men and women. It is not only the poorest and most ignorant whom the Gospel has benefited. It has been a gracious benediction also to those of high social standing and

* From "Christian Missions and Social Progress" by Rev. James S. Dennis, D.D., Volume I, 412 f.

with much culture. Not only the pariah but the Brahmin in India, not only the cooly but the viceroy in China, not only the peasant but the prince in Japan, not only the camp-followers but the chiefs of tribes in Africa—all these at the extremes of society and others in between have been helped by Jesus Christ, the Elder Brother of us all.

These miracles of grace have not been confined to pagan lands. In Christendom the changes have been both evolutionary and revolutionary. At times they have happened so quietly that those who were living in the midst of them failed to recognise their far-reaching efficacy and often regarded them as a mere matter of course. There was a time not so long ago when it was considered an outrage to discuss social conditions in the pulpit; but now a failure to do so would be taken as a proof that the preacher is remiss in his duty as a prophet of the God of righteousness and truth. The conscience of the Church is fast awakening to everything that pertains to human welfare and we are boldly applying Christianity to every part of life. This is a healthy move in the direction that will speedily make possible the wider diffusion of the principles of the Gospel of the Kingdom. We are also intelligently learning to accept Charles Kingsley's "belief

that not self-interest but self-sacrifice is the only law upon which human society can be grounded with any hope of prosperity and permanence." And nothing has demonstrated this truth more emphatically like the recent harrowing events in Europe. Well may we thank God and take courage for the morrow, which shall certainly be brighter than any yesterday.

"He is breaking down the barriers, he is casting up the way,
He is calling for his angels to build up the gates of day;
But his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above,
For the drum beats of his army are the heart beats of our love."

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CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CONCLUSIVE WORD

"As absolute religion for the individual, Christianity ministers to all his needs and furnishes the sufficient principle for all the activities of his life. As absolute religion for humanity it shall be established when it ministers to all needs and is adopted as the guiding principle in all lives. The direct and fundamental proofs of the Christian religion are found already in those who, resting upon the Divine love revealed in Christ, find blessedness and peace; and embodying the same love in their lives, serve their brethren. The true Church is the brotherhood of those who are united in this fellowship of service and love. The final proof will be given when all men in all places and all times acknowledge holy love as supreme, and manifest it in the completed kingdom of God. Then shall the absolute religion be fully known, for God will be all and in all. Until then we work in faith, for the proof of the Christian religion is not a deduction of logic, but an achievement of redeeming love."

—*George William Knox: "The Direct and Fundamental Proofs of the Christian Religion," page 195.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONCLUSIVE WORD

WE must emphasise clearly and repeatedly that Christianity is the religion of a Person and not of a book or of dogma. Professor Rendel Harris made this thought clear when he declared how absurd it would be, in place of the familiar lines of the hymn, to sing instead:

> "How sweet the name of Logos sounds
> In a believer's ear!"

When we speak of the authority of Christianity we are thinking of the influence which it has exerted throughout the world. The test is not one of statistics but of dynamics. It is not an external force but an inner constraining appeal to the emotions, the intellect, and the will based on arguments of solid and indisputable facts. It is the authority of the thrilling message of redemption which offers forgiveness and promises life everlasting. We thus speak of *the* Christian redemption for there is only one and none other, even that which is given us by the

Christ of Calvary who liveth for evermore. This is a vital experience which does not depend on dogmatic creeds nor on ecclesiastical pronouncements but on the testimony within. Christianity is the religion of a life which is inspired by Christ and his moral and spiritual ideals. Its essence has been well expressed by Paul in a sentence where the voice of experience is distinctly heard: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

Many things are desirable but few things are necessary and these are the essential necessities like food, air, water, and clothing. So also is it in religion. A beautiful Church building, a finely equipped choir, and financial endowments are satisfying; but in the last analysis they are among the non-essentials. Christianity has flourished without them, and if need be it can do so again, providing that the central essentials are present, which come from lives which are hid with Christ in God. Harnack says, in his "The Mission and Expansion of Christianity," that one of the distinctive features of the Primitive Church was the emphasis which it laid on life as opposed to theory. The test was

not creedal but personal. The question was not how and how much one believed, but how and how far one lived and acted in the light and under the stimulus of the constraining love of Jesus Christ. With this thought in our mind let us note some of the elements of Christianity which have given it such a conspicuous place among the agencies making for the uplift of the race.

Consider its reasonableness. Christianity is not against reason although at certain points it is *above* reason. We are led to God by our intuitions, and these conclusions are later endorsed by reason. So we can say with Charles Kingsley that "faith is reason exercised on the invisible," and with John Watson who referred to faith as the sixth sense, and made a worthy discrimination when he wrote: "It is the part of reason to verify intellectual conceptions and apply intellectual principles. . . . It is the part of faith to gather those hopes and feelings which lie outside the intellect." While the appeal is always made to the highest intelligence there is in man something deeper than "the freezing reason's colder part." Speaking of knowledge Tennyson said:

> "What is she cut from love and faith,
> But some wild Pallas from the brain

> Of demons? fiery-hot to burst
> All barriers in her onward race
> For power. Let her know her place;
> She is the second, not the first."

The ethical precepts and spiritual summons of Christianity have always commended themselves to the ripest judgment of the race. There have been interpretations of Christian truth which reflect pagan asceticism and worldly wisdom, but they are manifestly out of accord with the humane teachings of the New Testament. It is, moreover, our Protestant privilege to exercise the right of personal judgment and reject whatever is inconsistent with the spirit of Christ. In previous chapters we have considered some of the ideals, motives and inspirations of the Gospel. Among them are the revelation of perfection and love, the glory of Christ's grace of character, the deed of redemption by the Cross, the inspiration of the Divine presence for Christian living, the summons to earnest discipleship, and the practice of the wholesome virtue of brotherliness. These are surely sufficient for all purposes of daily living so that what things are hard to be understood had better be let alone for the slow unfolding of experience, instead of trying to burst a blood vessel in a premature grapple with them.

We cannot but be struck by the unique adaptability of Christianity which has enabled it to become acclimated in every land. It cannot be regarded by any as a foreign religion because once it is accepted by people, they find that it uniquely agrees with their needs. There are different types of Christian character which reflect the temperament and traditions of different nations. The purpose of Christianity is not to propagate Occidental ways of thought among Orientals nor vice versa. Its great aim is to permeate the life of the individual and of society with the Christian spirit in such ways that those who accept Christ will be led to improve also the conditions in which they live. Beneath the external dissimilarities there is, however, a profound unity in Christ. We can thus look forward to a great enrichment of the understanding of the many-sided character of our Lord, as contributions are made thereto by Christianised Hindu mysticism, Chinese ethic, Mohammedan devotion, and other forms of ethnic religion.

In this connection mention should be made of the universality of the Gospel. It has been at home in every land and century, with never a note of provincialism or prejudice. Human experience is never uniform and that is because

of the marvel of personality. The same is true of the varieties of religious experience, and Christianity alone of all the religions of the world has recognised this fact and provided for their needs. It thus satisfies the mind, stimulates the emotions, stirs the will, and strengthens to action. The test is not only intellectual, for that would make it exclusive and restricted and at times even theoretical; it is not wholly emotional, for this is more or less of a subjective test and the very fact that there are differences of temperament shows that it would not be safe to set up any single standard of emotionality. A more convincing test is the ethical which furnishes verifiable arguments that convince one in the open arena and which can be understood regardless of the separations caused by language, custom, and tradition. "By their fruits they shall be known," and herein Jesus spoke to the deepest desires of life.

The ethnic faiths have dismally failed. None of them are attractive or influential outside their native habitats, except where they have been given eclectic misinterpretations by religious dilettantes who understand neither the genius nor the spirit of those religions which they curiously espouse or rather patronise. Theosophy, for instance, is a jumble of Buddhism and Hinduism, welded together by the

pessimism of Schopenhauer; but those who advocate this sinister cult in Western lands derived their information at second-hand. As a matter of fact the influence of the great Oriental teachers is declining in their own lands and their power is being superseded by Jesus Christ. Where it is kept alive and halfway vigorous, it is due to the efforts of misguided individuals from Christendom who have gone out to galvanise what is virtually dead and in this way to keep the deluded natives from the light of Christ who alone can give them peace. Let me briefly illustrate this statement. The followers of Zoroaster are a vanishing quantity. It is not the Buddha of the Pitakas but the Buddha of the marvellously incredible birth-stories who appeals to the masses in Ceylon, India, Thibet, Siam, Japan. The power of Mohammed is indeed great, and it is even extending; but wherever he holds sway the people are in a backward condition and the ethics of Islam is such that Mohammedan lands are notoriously corrupt, whether it is Turkey, Persia, or Egypt. It may be said that equally disreputable conditions prevail in Christendom, but there is this difference. Evils do exist but under protest and never a day passes without the corruptions being exposed and attempts put forth to get rid of them. In pagan lands the iniquitous

conditions have the approval of the respective religions or they are ignored by the religious leaders who are more concerned with ceremonial rites and usages than with moral imperatives which touch the daily life and social relations. "No man knows the meaning of Christian until he has breathed for a year in the midst of the uncanny shadows of heathenism." This testimony from one who has lived there is no exaggeration. The difference between Christianity and paganism is one of atmosphere, ideal and outlook; and no dispassionate study can lead us to any other conclusion than that the Gospel of Christ alone has the elements of permanency which in successive generations enables it to renew its youth and be equal to any task that may be imposed upon it.

The comprehensiveness of Christianity is another worthy feature of this faith which has never confessed bankruptcy and looks into the future with fervent confidence. All life comes under its sway, and it is interested in everything that bears on the immediate or ultimate welfare of the whole human race. The familiar division of life into secular and sacred is a pagan inheritance which has been largely tinged with Jewish ritualistic conceptions. The message of the Incarnation lays emphasis on the

sanctity of all life and of all of life. To the Christian vision all people that on earth do dwell have latent possibilities, and are capable of responding to the appeals for the largest sort of sacrifice and the deepest kind of piety and the fullest type of consecrated devotion. The tender democracy of Christ thus extends a welcome to every nationality with the offer of equality of opportunity. Wherever it has been tried this programme has been justified by the splendid results, and the call comes to the Church to permit no barriers which will impede the effective Christian transformations of life anywhere or which may postpone the day of the complete triumph of Christ.

The gracious interest of the Gospel is further seen in the generous way that all disinterested human efforts have been endorsed. We now recognise with gratitude the ministry of science, art, music, literature, invention, travel, commerce, as agencies for the larger spread of Christianity, as they have also contributed to the clearer understanding of its wholesome truth. We no longer look askance at the findings of Darwin or the paintings of George Frederick Watts, or the oratorios of Handel, or the writings of Ruskin, or the marvels wrought by Edison, or the reports of Nansen, or the influence of Dodge. They have all helped

to enrich the meaning of Christianity and we do justly honour them even though it may not imply our committal to everything associated with their work. Indeed, as we read the history of the Christian centuries we find that Christianity has freely appropriated the best in paganism on the principle that these upward strivings of the soul are proofs of the benign presence of God in the midst of all peoples. We have thus had conserved for later generations the philosophy of Greece and the law of Rome; while the contact with the non-Christian religions through its Christian converts has brought into the Church elements which have emphasised the many-sidedness of Christian character and enterprise.

There is furthermore an opulence in Christianity which strikes to the very depths of life. The superlative language of Paul was not of the nature of exaggeration. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!" He prayed that the Ephesians "may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Yes, there is nothing stinted or penurious in

the ideas or the spirit of Christianity. It always insists on a maximum standard of piety and purity and rejoices in thankworthy goodness. The burden of the Sermon on the Mount is seen in the question of Jesus: "What do ye more than others?" He implied that the spirit of love never thinks of duty in any calculating fashion, but always does more than what is expected. The Christian is thus at his post long after all others have abandoned their work through exhaustion, discouragement or failure. There is nothing local, parochial, or provincial in his worship and his service, for he is a citizen of the world in the sense that he holds fraternal fellowship with members of other nations, even when the call of patriotism may seem to conflict with such spiritual intercourse. This may appear to be far too visionary when we know that the international relations of Christendom are to-day on a militaristic basis. But this anomalous fact makes it all the more necessary for those who believe in the ideals of Christ to interpret and apply them in ways that will compel attention and secure acceptance.

It requires much more than the concluding paragraph of a chapter to write of the achievements of Christianity. Stupendous as has been its growth, we are safe in saying that it is greater to-day than ever before. More glori-

ous triumphs of grace are being wrought in its name in every nation than has ever been achieved in any yesterday which has passed into history. It has introduced new moral and spiritual forces into the world and quickened hope in backward peoples and turned on the light of life on the world lying in the darkness of sin, despair and death. It is a workable faith and it appeals to what God has wrought through it as a conclusive demonstration of its supreme fittedness to our needs and of the entire world. Wherever vital Christianity has exercised sway, it has exalted the status of womanhood, given protection to childhood and imparted dignity to manhood. The Christianity of the first century went to slaves and slums and changed not only the individuals but also their surroundings, not only their moral and spiritual life but also their social and industrial life. The Christianity of the twentieth century goes to barbarous tribes and converts them and their conditions by the transfusing touch of Divine grace and the results are marvellous if not miraculous. If there has been failure in Christendom it is acknowledged that this is due to the inadequate and defective loyalty to the teachings of the Gospel, which so many profess to honour but few endeavour to practise. Our imperative

concern is not to defend Christianity but to live it. Let us accept its honest challenge and give it a fair trial in wholehearted consecration to our Saviour and Lord.

"Hail, Saviour, Prince of Peace!
Thy Kingdom shall increase,
Till all the world Thy glory see,
And righteousness abound
As the great deep profound,
And fill the earth with purity!"

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE CHURCH IDEA

"The Church of Christ is a *fellowship.* It is a fellowship with Jesus Christ; that is the divine element in it. It is a fellowship with the brethren; that is the human element in it. The Rock on which the Church was built was a *man confessing* —not the man apart from his confession, as Romanists insist, nor the confession apart from the man, as many Protestants argue. It was a man in whom long companionship with Jesus and the revelation from the Father had created a personal trust in His Messianic mission; and the faith which had grown out of the fellowship had the mysterious power of making the fellowship which had created it more vivid and real; for faith, in its primitive sense of personal trust, is fellowship become self-conscious. Faith is what makes fellowship know itself to be fellowship, and not haphazard social intercourse. . . . The individual believer is never lost in the society, and he is never alone and separate. The bond of union is not an external framework impressed from without, but a sense of fellowship springing from within. The believer's union to Christ, which is the deepest of all personal things, always involves something social. The call comes to him singly, but seldom solitarily."

—*Thomas M. Lindsay: "The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries," pages 6, 7.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHURCH IDEA

NO institution has received so much criticism in every age like the church. This is due in part to the misconceptions which exist concerning its place and mission. We often hear dismal utterances of the collapse of the Church and cynical references to its work, and yet the fact remains that this organisation continues to grow. In every generation men have seemed to see the Church tottering and about to fall; it has not done so but has rather revived its life and renewed its youth and taken a new start in its career of world-wide beneficence. Whatever views we hold about it we must acknowledge that it is a historical organisation and that it professes to continue perpetually, even to the end of time. What is its significance according to its founder Jesus Christ and its best interpreters and most loyal supporters?

The name *ecclesia* or church is found only twice in the Gospels and on both occasions it is in the Gospel of Matthew (16. 18; 18. 17); but the fact of the Church occurs quite often in the

reported teachings of Jesus. He probably did not refer to it by name for the same reason that He did not use the name Messiah or Christ of Himself, lest He should be misunderstood and needlessly come into antagonism with the religious leaders of the time. The word *ecclesia* corresponds to the Old Testament word *qāhāl,* which means assembly and implies the relationship of its members to Jehovah, particularly in worship. The New Testament meaning emphasises the sanctity of spiritual fellowship with God in Jesus Christ. The word *synagogue* which was more commonly used corresponds to the word *ēdāh,* which means congregation. It is, however, used only once of a Christian assembly and that in the epistle of James 2. 2, and this is explained by the fact that he was addressing the Christians of the Dispersion who would have understood its significance and would have appreciated the reminder that the Church was more closely related to the synagogue than to the Temple.

It is, however, in the writings of Paul and in the book of Acts that we find most frequent mention of the word *ecclesia,* where it is used 86 times, while in the rest of the New Testament it is used only 24 times.* A number of

* Lindsay: "The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries," p. 5.

synonymous expressions are used which convey the truth more clearly. Paul refers to the Church as "the household of the faith," which expresses the thought that the faithful are members of a family linked to each other by the ties of brotherhood (Gal. 6. 10). It is "a temple of God" and here the dignity of sanctity is set forth as a development in ample proportions (I Cor. 3. 16). It is the "body of Christ" and this phrase suggests the thought of the complete dependence of the believer on Christ, who is the head and who imparts strength, growth, and endurance in the mystical unity of the faith (Eph. 1. 23). One of the most refreshing ideas is that of the Church as a "fellowship," which implies the union and communion of the believers, based as it is on their fundamental and prior fellowship with God in Christ. So vital is this relationship that it has broken down all barriers of caste and country and made of the Church the greatest democracy which the world has ever seen. It is social in its spirit but it transcends guilds, lodges and societies which are more or less local in character. While not primarily a benevolent organisation, the Church has administered relief to the sick and poor and has been the inspirer, the founder, and the maintainer of a diversity of charities, far in excess of any-

thing elsewhere. The word *Church* is derived from the Greek word *kuriakon,* "that which belongs to the Lord." The sound of the word in the original is still retained in the Scotch word *kirk.* We are not pressing the meaning of the word when we say that it stands for the idea of devotion to God in Christ. It has a local bearing as when believers gathered in a particular town are addressed as "the church of God which is at Corinth even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus." It is also used with reference to the gathering for purposes of worship (I Cor. 11. 18). There is a more general application where we read that fear came upon "the whole Church," and again that "the Church had peace, being edified" (Acts 5. 11; 9. 31).

A distinction must be made between the Kingdom of God and the Church. The first is a perfect society where God perfectly reigns over souls who are being perfected by grace divine. This ideal is that far off divine event to which the whole of the redeemed creation moves. Paul uses this phrase as an equivalent for "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14. 17); here the thought is that of the inspiring principle in the life of the Christian, which is obedience to him who hath loved him with an everlasting love. Those who are thus

inspired labour for the establishment of the rule of the eternal Father and enjoy a profound kinship with all who are of the same mind. Those who think of Jesus as influenced almost altogether by an eschatological outlook have misread the gospels. It is true that He had the apocalyptic consciousness and that He expected the stages in the development of the Kingdom to be marked by cataclysmic changes. This has indeed happened in the revolutions and crises of history. But Jesus was not an alarmist predicting the speedy ending of the world, and so setting before His followers a scheme of life and a rule of living which were of a temporary character. The parables of the Kingdom disprove this contention. The parable of the mustard seed refers to the external development of the Kingdom from small beginnings; that of the leaven to its inward transforming influence; the statement that "the field is the world" emphasises its universality (Matt. 13. 31, 33, 38). He thus had in mind an ideal society which was to be spiritual in character, universal in outlook, progressive in method, persistent in purpose, and permanent in duration.

The Church is the unique agent which gives earthly expression to this heavenly ideal through forms of worship and methods of ac-

tivity which look forward to that glorious time when God shall be all and in all. The Church is not the Kingdom of God on the earth, but the means by which it is realised. This is done by bringing men and women into union with God through Jesus Christ and so enabling them to experience the sovereignty of divine grace in their lives. This notable and noteworthy agency was founded by Jesus Christ Himself. It was inevitable that an organisation should result from the companionship of Jesus and His disciples, and in fact it was necessary for the propagation and perpetuation of His redemptive purpose for the whole world. We cannot think of Jesus as a sort of a travelling evangelist dropping the good seed of the Kingdom here and there and not providing for the time when the seed shall germinate and yield a golden harvest. Surely the Master of us all was not so unsystematic and spasmodic in His ideals and efforts.

The purpose of the Church is seen in the words of the great commission: "make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Let them proclaim the gospel of God's redeeming and forgiving love. Let those who accept it be initi-

ated into membership by baptism. Let them be trained in holiness of life that they may enjoy the divine rule of freedom in the liberty of the Spirit and bear testimony from day to day to the efficacy of the grace of God in Jesus Christ the blessed Saviour. Of primary importance is the purpose of the society. Questions of polity are of secondary and subordinate consideration. They have to do with matters of administration and will necessarily be changed to suit the particular needs of the times, the country, and the people. The organisation will needs be flexible as to methods of procedure and it will be a mark of wisdom to keep it so, as long as the spirit of allegiance to Jesus Christ is the inspirational influence. Many of the practices of the Church have reflected the customs of the times and were adaptations of conditions which prevailed in the social institutions of the land where the Church had been established. For instance the laying on of hands was an impressive ceremony taken over from the synagogue. It was a symbol of supplication to God for the bestowal of blessing and not a sign of the conveyance of blessing by those who practised this rite. Sunday was originally a day dedicated to the sun-god; Christmas and Easter were at one time pagan festivals. There are missionaries who see pos-

sibilities for the Church in the Chinese practice of the worship of ancestors. In short, the subject of forms is an open question to be left to the Christian judgment of each age and land so that the Church in these respective places should feel free to adapt and adopt whatever is seen to be profitable to the advance of the cause. We are not expected literally to copy the apostolic methods any more than the apostles themselves were supposed to copy all of the modes of the Master. Here also the truth holds good that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." For instance, it is absurd to impose our Occidental institutions on Oriental peoples; and the missionaries of statesmanlike vision have pointed out the fallacy and danger of any such course. A volume like "Social Christianity in the Orient," by Clough, shows very conclusively that what suits the complex conditions in a democracy like the United States is wholly unsuitable to the gregarious instincts of little village communities in India. There must be organisation but it will be for the sake of the new life in Christ which will find expression in accordance with the several and diverse needs of the respective peoples for whom it is intended.

There are some good people who think that they can be Christians and yet not be identified

with the Church. They have no warrant for this attitude anywhere in the New Testament. The idea of "unattached Christians" is foreign to its teachings. The Christian life is impossible in isolation. A solitary Christian is a contradiction and an inconsistency. The Christian, moreover, who does not have enough of the grace of God to associate with other Christians, however narrow and bigoted they may be, needs to learn the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are faith, hope and love, in the clear and convincing expression of brotherhood. So then all who belong to Christ must needs seek the fellowship of each other for mutual edification and for united effort to spread the gospel of redeeming grace. The fact of such a society implies the exercise of discipline for its preservation and greater usefulness.

In the early days of its career the Church practised discipline with strictness and even severity. This was necessary in a young organisation when converts were being received from paganism, and the standards had to be maintained. The same is true on the mission field at the present time. But as the Church grew in favour with man it became indifferent to the enquiry whether it was also increasing in favour with God. The spirit of laxity therefore

crept in and after a time it asserted itself boldly and forcibly. Another reason for insistence on discipline was to enable the Church to develop Christian personality in its membership. It furnished the favourable atmosphere for the cultivation of the sterling virtues and the fragrant graces which are so distinctive of the Christian character. When the standards were high as in the Apostolic Church, what a galaxy of spiritual talent made its appearance, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! But no sooner was there a lowering of these standards, as in the post-apostolic Church in the very next century, than there was seen the practice of superficial Christian living. Whatever may be the explanation, there is one reason which cannot be ignored and that is that when the commands of Christ sat impressively on His followers there was spiritual advance, but when this was not the case there was a marked deterioration and an unwholesome influence on the world. The truth which this fact brings home is that Christianity is comprehensive in extending a welcome to every penitent who trusts in Christ for salvation; but it is also exclusive in that it will not tolerate any one who would compromise with evil of any kind. As John Bunyan quaintly remarked, there is "Only room for body and soul, but not for body

and soul and sin." Under these circumstances can we conceive of Christians who profess to have the spirit of the Master who yet refuse to identify themselves with the Church because they will not submit to its requirements, since they would be a sort of a free lance and have their own way.

The Church was founded by Christ on Peter who made that adoring confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In this sense the Church is founded on every member who enters it by the exercise of faith and the experience of personal union with the living Christ. Every member has made the personal surrender to God in Christ and realises from day to day that he must refer and defer to Christ as the standard of life. Those who have such an experience will know the faith which worketh by love and stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made them free. Jesus is at once founder and foundation of the Church; but all Christians are the supporters of this holy structure, holy because of the programme of spiritual health and holiness which it espouses. Herein is found an explanation of the many defects of the Church. It is divine in its origin but it is also a very human institution and the elements which compose it have their inevitable limitations. In spite of the careful

scrutiny of those who enter the Church, it has happened that unworthy souls have found their way in; but who will say that such are openly tolerated and that their practices are countenanced?

The thought of one Church controlling all others first made its appearance in the days after the apostles when the leaders of the Church had lost their spiritual power and were endeavouring to bolster up their position by the claims of apostolicity and catholicity in a spirit which was neither apostolic nor catholic. The Church at Antioch recognised the seniority of the mother Church at Jerusalem, but it did not acknowledge any submission to it as though it was the prime teacher. The later claims of the Church at Rome were based on political considerations as determined by the metropolis of the empire. But this Church had no intrinsic virtue of spiritual excellence and had to prove its authority in the same way as all other local Churches, which were independent of each other but confessed the unity of fraternal fellowship in Christ. If one Church was more important than another it was on account of the greater service which it rendered and not on account of any material considerations like wealth or social standing. The same test must be applied in this age of practical proofs.

Is the Church helpful in creating and enriching the Christian life? Then it has the blessing of Christ and the appreciation of mankind. This is not only true of a local Church and of a denomination, but also of the Church as a whole. It is then the worst kind of schism when any particular Church presumes to dominate all others and to unchurch them because they refuse to accept its peculiar shibboleths. A Church may have historical continuity and trace its origin back to former centuries; but that is no valid claim to superiority any more than the ability to trace one's ancestry back to American Revolutionists or the Pilgrim Fathers should give some more favourable consideration than others. The test is far more exacting and practical than that of antiquity and ancestry. That Church obtains our respect, receives our support and commands the future for God and humanity which comes nearest to the ideal of Christ and whose programme is in closest harmony with the spirit and will of Christ. It is not an institutional or sacerdotal test, but an inspirational and spiritual one. The marks of the Church must be interpreted not in terms of mechanics but of dynamics. It is not the machine but the power, whether of steam or of electricity, which is the important consideration. So also with the

Church. Where the presence of Christ is experienced His people have devised ways and means by which they have been able to further His highest and supremest honour. The Church exists to realise and spread the sovereign supremacy of Christ the Lord and Saviour. And those are accounted the most faithful and loyal who in season and out of season labour unto the building up of the body of Christ till all attain unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

CHAPTER NINE: THE LOYAL FELLOWSHIP

"We are made to serve each other; and if the idea of the church is to be realised, there must be, on the part of Christian men, the frank and cordial acceptance of their mutual obligations, and an equally frank and cordial recognition of the presence of the life of God and the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost in all who have received Christ. The restoration of 'the communion of saints,' instead of repelling people from the church, as some seem to fear, would constitute an irresistible attraction to it. The tendency to spiritual isolation is abnormal. It is generally the result of circumstances which have repressed, by failing to satisfy, the natural and instinctive longing of men to escape from the narrow and monotonous circle of their personal anxieties and sorrows and joys into a larger and fuller life. Give them the chance of real fellowship, with the infinitely varied experience of a community, and the instinct will reveal its power. It would then become worth while to enter the church; and 'the privileges of church membership' would cease to be almost nominal. The church would become infinitely richer in spiritual thought; it would have a larger and more varied knowledge of the perpetual revelation of God to those who have received the Holy Ghost; its spiritual and moral life would receive a freer and more complete development."

—R. W. Dale: "Essays and Addresses," page 149.

CHAPTER NINE

THE LOYAL FELLOWSHIP

THE church was organized in a very quiet and informal manner. Jesus looked into the hearts of a few eager and earnest men and invited them to be associated with Him and they promptly responded. The fellowship which He thus organised was to be a communion of spirits and not a collection of nondescript persons. These early companions of the Master were called *disciples* because they were chosen by Jesus to learn His teaching and to be influenced by His example (Mark 3. 14; Luke 22. 28). They were also known as *apostles,* for they were commissioned with the particular business of preaching the Gospel of Jesus (Mark 3. 14). Their ability depended on the extent of their sympathy with his purposes. He was the source of their life and it was for His sake and in His name that they engaged in the labour of evangelising the human race and establishing the Kingdom of God.

This society of kindred souls was a Brotherhood where no social or racial distinctions were

considered. All such temporal discriminations were not timely. They were abolished in Christ in whom Jew and Gentile could meet with the strong consciousness of common hopes, desires and joys. They confessed that Christ was their Peace who had broken down the middle wall of partition and that where He is supreme there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all and in all (Eph. 2. 14; Gal. 3. 28; Col. 3. 11). Within this fraternal circle a large place was given for the development of individual traits which did not interfere with the compact solidity of the whole. In this respect it very much resembles a family where the brothers and sisters each go their own way in personal preferences but all go one way as to the honour, dignity, and unity of the whole family. Think of John a Jew writing to Greeks in Ephesus and considering nothing whatever about national temperaments and distinctions as he interpreted the idea of the family-fellowship of the Church and rejoiced in the fact that his readers participated in it (I John 1. 3, 4). The difference which he emphasised was not ethnical and ecclesiastical, but ethical and spiritual.

There was one outstanding distinction which separated humanity into two classes—those who were of God and those who were of the

world, the children of the light and the children of the darkness. "Light signifies purity, truth, goodness; as darkness signifies foulness, falsehood, malice" (Findlay). All other distinctions appeared trivial and insignificant in comparison with this one. It was a question of character which was of primary importance, and in urging this as the supreme test of fellowship, the blow was effectually aimed at all aristocratic pretensions and social prerogatives and considerations of wealth. In this respect, as we have already considered, the Church was the first democracy which the world has ever seen. Inspired by the spirit of brotherliness, slave and freeborn mingled without embarrassment and found joy and rejoicing in each other's companionship.

The primary condition of membership is the confession of Christ. Every one acknowledged Him as Saviour and surrendered the whole life in loyal allegiance to do His will in all things. It was not merely a confession of words which could be glibly uttered by the repetition of a creed; it was rather a confession of deeds which was made not only at the outset but all through life, regardless of the change of circumstance. It was thereby shown that the members of this fraternity were moved by the instinct and impulse of that divine love which first appeared

in Jesus Christ the Son of the Eternal Father. It is well to remind ourselves that Jesus was particular about the conditions of membership. He cared less for numbers and more for obedience. "He that will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Fellowship with Him meant much in the way of denial and the price was not light; but the compensations were far in excess of any losses or discomforts. It will thus follow that all who accept these terms will not lightly set aside the manifest obligations which involve and include sacrifice and toil. If this were remembered continuously there will be fewer parasites in the Church who live on the labours of others, fewer idlers who wish to have the benefits without bearing the burdens, and there will be more of whom it will be said that they are at it and always at it.

It must be distinctly understood and repeatedly stated that the privileges of membership do not consist in simply being the recipients of bounty, but also in being the imparters of grace to others. This mutual sympathy and obligation enrich the fellowship and make the unity warm, hearty and gladsome. There is recognised a wide diversity of gift and activities according to talent and training; but it is all inspired by the one divine Spirit of life,

light and love, which gives reality and vividness to the abiding presence of Christ. Their hidden fellowship with Jesus is manifested in open fellowship with each other and the bonds which unite them are far stronger than those which fetter the members of lodges and other fraternal organisations. The right hand of fellowship is a symbol of the hearty welcome and this need not be withdrawn on account of any misunderstandings which may take place later. Such misadventures and misfortunes should be intelligently anticipated and earnestly avoided.

The Christian fellowship is so profound because it is based on the prior communion with God. Direct access to him through Jesus Christ gives a sense of spiritual freedom and a refreshing experience of the divine grace and mercy, and imparts the recreative energy of the everlasting love. Language cannot describe the abounding joy which takes possession of the soul when God has been found. But if it is to continue and increase there must be unrestricted co-operation with each other. The rare secrets of the Christian life are not found in solitude. It is not the celibate soul living in isolation who enjoys a full-orbed vision of the goodness and holiness of God. Individual salvation is made secure as it is worked out in company with other like-minded souls; in fact it is pos-

sible only under these circumstances. "We have fellowship one with another," wrote John the apostle, to which he added the words, "and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin," as though the two depended on each other and went together. This fellowship was one of the conspicuous features of the early Church. The members were hearty and honest in their relations with each other. One of the most notorious exceptions was the Church at Corinth where jealousy had taken the place of charity, due to the spirit of excessive individualism which had put the entire organisation out of plumb. This spirit of fellowship was not confined to the local group but was extended to take in all the believers throughout the Roman empire and wherever the Gospel had obtained a stable lodgement. Those who were less favoured were thus helped by those who were better off in this world's goods as well as in spiritual endowments. The poor in Jerusalem received contributions from the Christians of Macedonia, while the Church in Antioch became the centre of the missionary enterprises of the Apostle Paul and faithfully stood by him in his endeavours to spread the truths of the Christian redemption far and near. It is easy to imagine what a strong argument such practical exhibitions of Christian interest proved towards

unifying the entire Church and demonstrating the large charity and genuine catholicity of Christianity.

We can think of the Church under a variety of aspects. It is a *home* where kindness is found and where disinterested love makes an atmosphere which is not only unique but wonderfully stimulating in the development of the virtues of charity and peace. The Church is a *school* and here goodness is cultivated and character is developed; discipline is also exercised within its bounds, not for the sake of the excommunication, but of the education of the members in perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. The Church is also a *sanctuary* where faith and hope are nurtured in the practice of worship through prayer, meditation, and testimony; it is the place where weary souls find consolation, and discouraged spirits obtain cheer, and those who are perplexed and dismayed receive guidance and strength to continue in their allotted work with fidelity. How these and other ministrations are to be carried out must be left to the Church which enjoys the guidance of the Holy Spirit and therefore understands how to meet and solve the particular problems which confront it. The early Church developed a polity which met its needs. But the leaders of a later day made the mistake when

they supposed that there was a special sanctity in the apostolic polity, as though the same Holy Spirit had ceased to guide subsequent generations in terms of the explicit promise of our Lord. It were unreasonable to suppose that the Church of to-day must operate in accordance with methods that were good enough in colonial centres of the first century instead of recognising the radically changed situation of the twentieth century. The American Church is faced by problems due to immigration, the increase of city populations of a heterogeneous character, and the complications of industrialism, commercialism, and the unprecedented awakening of the social conscience. We are confident that the Holy Spirit is guiding the modern Church and encouraging the practice of the principle of adaptation. "The Christlike alone are genuine successors of the Apostles"—so wrote George Tyrrell who was expelled from the Roman Catholic Church because of his liberal ideas and his determination to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit even where the ecclesiastical halo was not to be seen. Those who insist on ancient forms at any cost are obsessed by the glamour of antiquity and show themselves incapable of appreciating the contemporary activities of the living Christ. They need to be reminded of the

oft-quoted test of Ignatius, expressed in the familiar phrase: "Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church."

The character of the members of the Church is very picturesquely advertised by the names by which they were known among themselves and by the outside world. The earliest name was that of *disciples,* which implied that they had accepted Jesus as their Master and were being guided by His rule of life, amenable to correction, responsive to instruction, submissive to discipline and direction. They were called *brethren,* since they acknowledged one common source of life, the Heavenly Father and the elder Brother Jesus Christ; bound to one another by such strong ties it was not possible that superficial disturbances could lightly sever them. They were *friends* and so they were cordial in their companionship and shared their mutual joys and sorrows disinterestedly and loyally. They were known as the *followers* of Christ, for they walked in His steps and made Him the pattern of their life whom they imitated as to the spirit of devotion which animated Him continuously and consistently. They were *believers* and thus confessed their faith in Christ as Saviour from sin, and as the One who is sufficient for all the trying seasons of the soul; their confidence in Him was whole-hearted

and their experience of His grace had the exhilaration of uttermost gladness. Paul spoke of himself as a *bondservant* of Jesus Christ and thereby declared how utterly he had surrendered his life to do the will of Christ at any cost; the secret of his marvellous career is indicated in this fact which he never hesitated to make known both to friend and foe, in season and out of season. How readily they acted as *witnesses* and thus spoke from firsthand experience of what Christ had done for them in bringing them out of darkness into light; they were, moreover, very happy of the privilege to communicate the blessed knowledge of a personal and present salvation to every one with whom they came in contact. They were further called *saints* in that they were striving after the ideal of holiness as set forth in the complete character of Christ; this was indeed their vocation, for they were called to be saints, and as long as they kept this thought before them they would be aspiring towards the splendid goal of advance and achievement. It was, however, the name *Christian,* which has survived all the changes of the centuries, which became "the cardinal title of the faith," and which expresses more fully than any of the other names the sublime distinctiveness of the charm and glory of the new life in Jesus Christ.

The name advertises the honour of Christ and whoever bears it is under manifest obligation to be worthy of the solemn call and the sacred confession.

It is then not some vague ideal to be dreamed about which is placed before us, but an inspiring reality which not only compels our attention but summons us to instant action. And the Church which furnishes the suitable atmosphere for the working out of these things need offer no apology for its right to do work in the name of the Head of the whole Church. In the last analysis, no one can unchurch us except we ourselves; and this is done by un-Christlike behaviour which contradicts the most elementary truths of the Christian character. Dr. Slattery well says that "It is the unrecorded sainthood which has been made in the Church of the ages which is the most eloquent proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. We know only a few of the vast army of saints who have marched in silent triumph through the Christian years." This fact furnishes the final argument for the reality of the vital fellowship among Church members. Baptism is the external symbol of the inward disposition of one who would enter the Church. It is a pledge of acceptance by Christ and it was instituted by Him to be a sign of the living experience of

union with Him. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus to be a constant reminder of His redemptive death and to be an occasion of union between all who are in union with Himself. This most sacred symbol of His redeeming love has alas been the cause of much loveless contention among His followers who have read into the simple service of faith and fraternity many of the metaphysical and ritualistic ideas of paganism. It is very depressing to read the chapter of the Church's history where the discordant sounds of anathemas are heard instead of the sweet music of Hallelujahs to the glory of the one and only Saviour. The day is coming when our vision will be purged so that we shall be able to see what is of momentous import in the Christian life and how it can be realised through the fellowship of Christians, whatever their name or sign. We can easily see how great will be the force of such a testimony of Christ-inspired souls and what a conclusive argument it can be for the power of the living Christ in extending His supremacy. It will bring people of every tribe and nation into the membership of the Universal Church which comprehends all sects and denominations in a blessed communion of souls who are akin in character to the Lord and Saviour of us all.

CHAPTER TEN: THE CONTROLLING PURPOSE

"The church is first of all a worshipping body. She sings praises and offers prayers unto God. She cultivates the devotional life and trains men to bow their heads and hearts before the King of heaven. Public worship is a force to be carefully safeguarded and constantly strengthened. A church becomes a more effective working church when it has once learned to pray and sing. Bringing the heart to the throne of grace increases all its capacities and makes it capable of larger service. Public worship, moreover, is the testimony which the church bears to the community of its faith in the God who has revealed himself in Christ. For this reason, public worship should be full-toned and jubilant. Paul was always concerned about the impression which the church in her worship might make upon a visiting stranger. All preachers who have the Pauline wisdom plan and labor for the improvement of their church worship. To give it a richer and more penetrating tone, to impart to it a higher beauty, to suffuse it with a more solemnising and subduing spirit, is to increase the power of the church, not only over the lives of its members, but over the feeling of the community."

—Charles E. Jefferson: "The Building of the Church," page 177.

CHAPTER TEN

THE CONTROLLING PURPOSE

THE presence of the Church in any community is regarded as a sign of civilisation and enlightenment. Parents do not want to raise their families in a town without a Church, even though they themselves may have nothing to do with it. The church would seem to guarantee safety and to increase the value of real estate and to bring many other incidental advantages. There is an element of superstition underlying the popular conception of the Church and this is due to a failure to recognise what are its supreme functions. There is another misjudgment on the part of earnest people who expect the church to undertake all manner of philanthropic campaigns and so to convert the pulpit into a sounding board of all sorts of benevolent enterprises. The central interest for which the pulpit exists will then be set aside and matters which belong to the circumference will be given the right of way.

There is a difference between the platform

and the pulpit. As long as there is a desk with the open Book of God upon it, the preacher must speak out of the book the message of eternal life, and bring God near to men, and enable them to realise that in the crises of life God is with them. This is a rare opportunity of the Church because there is no other institution which can engage in this particular work to make real the spiritual life, by giving vitality to religious and moral beliefs. Where this is faithfully done it will feed the flame of devotion; it will quicken the aspirations towards God; it will deepen the experience of sanctity; it will develop the character that is patterned after Christ; and it will furnish outlets for the exercise of love.

When Jesus uttered His prophetic protest in the outer courts of the Temple, He quoted the words of Isaiah and gave it a larger meaning: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." This declaration bears upon the central purpose of the Church. The secret of its power is expressed in one of His memorable sayings: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Where Christ's presence is spiritually realised the atmosphere is one that makes for jubilant worship. In a general way worship is the recognition of what is

worth while in character and deed. We look with admiration on a great painting like "Washington Crossing the Delaware" and we remind ourselves of the heroic days in the early period of our national life. We stand with reverence before Gaudens' statue of Lincoln and recall the unique services which he rendered to the nation in most trying times. But this is not worship in the religious sense. True worship consists of the grateful and reverential approach of the soul to God the Father in the name of the Mediator of our confession, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. And this is done in a spirit of faith and freedom. The worship of the Church is intended to satisfy the instinctive craving of the human heart for God. Men are often unaware of this urgent need and look to unsatisfying places for relief, but find none.

The pressure of life's struggle is so great, the strain in commercial activities is so severe, the might of material things is so appalling, that whether men recognise it or not, whether they acknowledge it or not, they are yearning for the living God because He alone can remove the discord of spirit and pacify the distress of soul. Here then is the great mission of the Church, to enable people to experience that God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in every time of need. Just as the Holy of Holies

was the central shrine in the ancient Temple, so the place of prayer is at the heart of the Church's worship. Everything bears upon it and everything is influenced by it. The very atmosphere of the service is surcharged by the spirit of devotion and only those who come in an expectant attitude receive its benefits. Prayer is a most exacting exercise demanding severe discipline of the will and concentrated surrender of the spirit of man to the Spirit divine. To think of prayer mainly as petition is to emphasise only one aspect of it and that not the most important. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"—the act of listening with intent to know the will of God and to obey it is an important feature of prayer. There is so much restlessness because of uncertainty. If I know that I am in the line of the divine purpose and that I have the divine approval in my present occupation, what a source of strength that fact does impart to me! It was not fatalism but faith in the supreme sovereignty of the will of God that gave such courage to Calvin and the Puritans. A later age may pass judgment on their mistakes, but we cannot deny that they were true to their convictions and this came from their confidence in God. If we excel them at the cost of moral stability it is a very doubtful advantage.

The psalmist was confused and perplexed until he went into the sanctuary and then the scales fell off his eyes. The prophet Jeremiah, at a time when the trial of his faith was keen, expostulated with God, saying: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet would I reason the cause with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Chap. 12. 1.) He thus wrestled with doubt and laid it low and there came from out the dark cloud the voice which spoke encouragement to his soul. This is an illustration of the reasoning type of prayer which is accompanied with intense meditation. A different kind finds expression in the jubilant words of another who was uttering his gratitude and praise in the thrilling sentences: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Thanksgiving and praise are also forms of prayer, for so do we confess our gladness for the divine benefits which are given not according to the measure of our asking, but exceeding abundantly above all that we do ask or think, even according to the riches in glory in Christ Jesus. There are many places outside the Church where prayer can be offered and times other than the specified hours of public worship. But that makes all the more significant the intelligent use of the means of grace in

the house of prayer which is consecrated for that particular purpose.

> "The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:"

How necessary then that we should frequently and regularly find our way to the sanctuary of God where the voice of the Spirit can be heard. If there must needs be an oratory in every heart there must also be a place where kindred spirits gather that they may obtain replenishment and enrichment. It is indeed in such an atmosphere that the personality can be suitably developed. When Lord Clyde faced Delhi with his small army, he turned to his officers one Sunday evening and asked them to select the bravest men to lead the forlorn hope. They replied that a prayer meeting was in session at the time in camp and that if he attended it he may be able to find the desired men. And he was not disappointed. These men were fearless because through prayer they had laid hold on the Eternal God and they were ready to respond to the call of duty even at the cost of death. Worship is sacerdotal when more thought is given to the external performance of ritual and ceremonial on the plea that things must be done decently and in order. Worship is sacramental when the adoring approach

to God in Christ, whatever the manner of it may be, is the primary consideration, under the impression that God is Spirit and they who worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth, with as little of the mechanical accessories as possible. Let us, however, not discard any of the helps so long as the worship imparts strength for the performance of the work of life, as becometh those who know and honour the living Christ.

Our fathers worshipped in unpretentious structures, but they were warmed by the fires of faith and forgot all the disadvantages and inconveniences of their material surroundings. The room was small and it required little fire to heat it. We now meet in a spacious auditorium, but have we overlooked the necessity for increasing the heating capacity? You cannot obtain spiritual fire from such secondary and subordinate agencies like high class music, cultured pulpit eloquence, excellent entertainments and enjoyable sociables. These have a valued place in the work of the Church, but they can never serve as a substitute for the spirit of flaming devotion to Christ, the experience of His constraining love, and the vivid consciousness of His comforting presence. These are the blessings which give the distinctive note and tone to the Church, and all who are associ-

ated with it have a warmth and heartiness of disposition not obtainable in any other society. Let it further be remembered that even in the Church they are obtained only through the medium of worship.

There are some who declare that they go to Church to be impressed and not to be instructed. Such a conception savours of the sacerdotal with the dim religious light, the mystic swell of the organ, and the voice of the preacher lost in the intonings of the priest. This is not the Protestant idea. The pulpit is made central in order that worship might be made intelligent and acceptable. A weak pulpit means an effete Christianity without vigour to act as the purifier of social conditions and as the inspirer of redemptive graces and virtues. The Church which makes much of preaching knows how to confess its vibrant faith to the world and realises its mission to give a spiritual interpretation of all life. There never has been a greater need for such work and the opportunity is rich with urgency to direct people out of the quagmire of doubt and sin and point them to the Holy Saviour who also is the Lord of life. His control over the individual has never failed to stir the emotions to move the will and to give the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Faithful hearing by the pew is the tru-

est kind of worship, because it implies self-examination and penitence, faith and consecration, resolution and quick action. Thus there is a quickening of heart and life that gives evidence in the practical fruits of righteousness, peace and joy in a spirit of holiness.

The pulpit must take its work more seriously if it would command a hearing from the world. The Church must lead the thinking of the age and form public opinion on the great moral issues in the way that Savonarola dominated Florence, and Calvin influenced Geneva, and Knox appealed to Scotland, and Hugh Price Hughes and Dale and Clifford spoke to English Nonconformity as well as to all England, in the ways that Beecher made himself heard in the great crisis of our national life and Phillips Brooks preached to all classes in the Republic. What has been done can again be done and the Macedonian call is most urgent in these days of strife and anguish and uncertainty. The greatest need then is not for organisers and advertising agents but for preachers with the prophetic unction who will see the vision of human need and divine supply and understand it and interpret it with passionate conviction and compelling persuasion. Let it further be remembered that the Church is not a mausoleum in honour of a dead Christ nor a

museum of outworn beliefs and antiquated creeds. It is the place where Christian character is built up and where Christians are enabled to work the works of God in the name of the living Christ. Here men and women receive spiritual instruction and the young people are given religious education so that they grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The minister is at the head of all the activities which make for constructive evangelism, and the membership of his church is always found at the forefront of all movements working for civic reform, social righteousness, moral progress and spiritual liberty.

There never has been an age when more was heard about brotherhood, arbitration and international peace, and when appearances seemed to justify the dawning of a new and better era. But events have conclusively shown that it is one thing to talk smoothly, and a different matter to act in accord with the nobly gracious professions. The conflicts with Gnosticism and Marcionitism and other undermining errors in the early centuries could not have been successful for the Church if the leaders as well as the rank and file of the Church membership had not been instructed in the faith. It is not any different to-day when such insidious and subtle fallacies like Christian Science, Russellism,

Spiritualism, Ethical Culturism and the like are being offered as substitutes for the evangelical Christianity of the New Testament. It is the imperative task of the preacher who is also a teacher to educate his people in the meaning and might of the Gospel. It is his first business and his last business and his business all the time to be an evangelist and bring people one by one into fellowship with God and Christ. But after this has been done, it is incumbent on him in even a more exacting way to train his people that they may become intelligent and useful members of the Church.

From its very inception the Church has had to contend with error and to struggle for its existence and for its increasingly growing influence. The great need on the mission field is for more teachers who will not only fit the converts for baptism but make them worthy members of the native Church. The apostle Paul's ideal for a strong church is set forth in the epistle to the Ephesians. The ascended Christ purposed that there should be a wide diversity of gifts for the benefit of the church consisting of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, "for the equipment of the saints," that they may engage in the business of ministering efficiently in the name of Christ, for the upbuilding of the Church (chap. 4. 11 ff.). The

forms which this training should take will depend on circumstances.

The Sunday School has rendered a right noble service and many thousands have been led into the church through its doors. But it has not always been able to hold the young men when they reach the period of adolescence. Many causes contribute to this misfortune for this is just the time when youth most needs the guidance of experience. We have not understood the psychology of youth sufficiently enough and we have not adequately appreciated the marvel of personality, and so our approach to young life has not been marked by versatility and adaptability. This is explained by the other fact that we have not had trained teachers in the Sunday School and that good intentions have taken the place of proper preparation. "Tell it not in Gath" but is it not true that many teachers are ignorant of the elementary teachings of the Bible, not to speak of the great truths of Christianity and the history of the Church in its various appeals to humanity? The introduction of the graded lessons has caused so much confusion and has even been met with opposition because the ground had not been prepared. From present indications we are, however, confident that this important institution will be put upon a more

stable basis and accomplish a far greater work. When this is done the classes for catechumens and probationers will be made the connecting link between the Sunday School and Church.

Can there be anything more important and indispensable than for the Church to give itself more faithfully to the work of deepening the life of devotion, of enlightening the conscience, of educating its members in a clearer understanding of the whole truth of God, and of giving them the requisite incentive to live and act soberly, righteously and godly in the world and so hastening the coming of the Kingdom of grace and redemption?

"If peace be in the heart,
The wildest winter storm is full of solemn beauty,
The midnight lightning flash but shows the path of duty,
Each living creature tells some new and joyous story,
The very trees and stones all catch a ray of glory,
If peace be in the heart."

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE SACRED WRITINGS

"God-in-Christ by the Holy Spirit teaches men still in many ways—through the Bible, by means of the Church, always appealing to the individual reason and conscience, which is enlightened from within as well as from without. But the chief source of authority is that record of Divine revelation, culminating in Christ, which is contained in the Bible. In that Divine library is given a sufficient record of a series of revelations gathering round the revelation, partly leading up to Jesus Christ our Lord, partly leading on from Him; but of the whole He is the center, the climax, and the crown. We are dependent on the New Testament for the transmission of knowledge concerning Christ; and for this and other reasons the collection of books called the Bible occupies a position of its own, which constitutes it, when rightly interpreted, a supreme rule of faith and practice for Christian believers. Christ is first as Lord—the whole Christ of the New Testament. The Bible becomes the Word of Christ, if it be rightly read and understood, with Himself as the Light of the whole. The Holy Spirit has taught also from the first in the community of the Christian Church and so teaches still. But the Bible is the norm for the Church, not the Church for the Bible. The duty of the Church in relation to the Scriptures is to preserve, transmit, distribute, interpret, and obey."

—*W. T. Davison: "The Chief Corner-Stone," page 35.*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SACRED WRITINGS

THE Church was organised for the purpose of maintaining and propagating the living experience of Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Its aim was to direct men to God through Christ so that they may pattern their lives in accordance with His perfect character and demonstrate His gracious sufficiency to meet the deepest needs of mankind. It was inevitable that a company of people who were brought together with such a motive should in course of time have some literary memorials of their faith which would testify to succeeding generations concerning the nature of their religious life and influence. The Christian Church of the first century had in its possession at the outset a remarkable set of documents which were considered of supreme and indispensable worth for religious guidance. This was the Old Testament which was the growth of over fifteen hundred years and which recorded the will and purpose of God in divers ways. Now through the utterance of prophet, again in the ecstatic aspiration of saint, or the jubilant

praise of psalmist, or the didactic speech of a preacher, or the impressive deed of a valiant hero, or in the patriotic activities or disloyal lapses of the chosen people—in these and other like ways God was making self-disclosures of Himself. The Old Testament is a remarkably varied collection of different kinds of literature. It consists of graphic history, interesting biography, curious genealogies, precise rules of ritual, elaborate law codes, apocalyptic visions, stirring prayers, practical precepts, fervent songs, and fiery speeches. Among its authors were peasants and princes who were equally moved by the Divine Spirit to express themselves by recording their experiences, their hopes and their desires concerning God and duty.

Like the small spring from which the majestic river flows, like the protoplasmic germ from which life in all its richness and wonder has developed, so the beginnings of the Old Testament were almost insignificant; but they embosomed vast and limitless potentialities. Like most ancient literature the germ of this notable library consisted of folk-songs as the Song of the well (Numbers 21. 17, 18), and David's lament over Jonathan (II Sam. 1. 19 ff.). In more settled conditions the opportunity was availed of for historical writings. Amos was

the first prophet who preserved his spoken appeals in written form, and he in common with many another prophet of a later day was led to this way of speaking, because their public appearances were prohibited by the rulers. To these earlier writings others were added from time to time, and after the return from exile under Ezra and Nehemiah they were gathered together. This latter period has well been called the golden age of Old Testament literature. The three divisions were (1) the Law, which consisted of the Pentateuch; (2) the Prophets, which included the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, known as the "former prophets," and the distinctly prophetical books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve—called the "latter prophets"; (3) the Writings, which were a miscellaneous collection of books and contained the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. This entire list of books was called the Old Testament Canon and it was regarded as the standard of Biblical authority. The process of formation by which this decision was reached continued from B. C. 400 to B. C. 200 and even down to A. D. 96.

The Old Testament was justly regarded by the Christian Church as its most precious

legacy. It was the book which nourished the faith of our blessed Saviour, from which the apostle Paul obtained his illumination, and which was the efficient director of the religious life of the early disciples. It helped in the formation and development of character and influenced the practices of Christian conduct. It was, moreover, used with discrimination; some parts being regarded as more suggestive than other parts. The Psalms, for instance, speak more comfortingly than the genealogical lists, and the prophets are more direct in their appeals for righteousness than the priests with their ancient and venerable ritual. "Without its ample areas and wider watersheds," says Principal George Adam Smith, "the rivers which grew in the new dispensation could never have gained one-tenth of their volume or their influence."

The apostles gave their testimony to a living and redeeming Christ and those who accepted their word received deliverance from sin and rejoiced in the consciousness of Christ which gave them victory over evil. The Gospels constitute a fourfold witness to the life and labour of Jesus Christ. They are also interpretations of the supreme character of His person and the central place which He must have in the lives of all His followers. The epistles were called

forth by the urgent needs of the churches which had been founded by the apostles. They were written for immediate guidance in matters of teaching and practice, to set some Christians right in their understanding of the gospel of redemption, to show others what was expected of them as worthy followers of Christ, and to point out to yet others the principles which should guide them in their individual, social and church relationships. These letters were read frequently at the gatherings of the Christians and gradually they assumed a place of authority, since they were almost altogether written by the apostles of our Lord, who were supposed to have a clearer and more direct knowledge of the spirit and claims of Christ. There was no thought in the minds of any of these writers that their letters were of equal authority with the Old Testament. Not one of them would have presumed to regard his literary utterances as comparing in worth and weight with the holy oracles of the old dispensation. The high position which these documents, however, subsequently occupied was due to an attempt on the part of the Church to defend the faith against the perversions and distractions of those who would do violence to its essential message.

The New Testament was formed in opposi-

tion to the heresies of Marcion and Montanus about 180; but even down to the fifth century there were differences of opinion as to the right of some books to a place in the Canon. It was not till the Council of Trent in 1546, which was summoned in opposition to the Reformation that the decisive word was spoken concerning what was really canonical. The Protestant leaders moreover contended that the test of canonicity is not primarily ecclesiastical but experimental. In the words of one of the Reformed symbols: "We know those books to be canonical and the sure rule of our faith not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books upon which, however useful, we cannot found any articles of faith." Luther and the other Reformers declared the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God because it spoke to the depths of their spiritual life with a persuasiveness which was winsome and comforting beyond the ability of any other book so to do. Many of our theories about the Bible have come to us wholesale from rabbinic Judaism. We must therefore dispossess ourselves of them before we can adequately appraise the full value of this book. If we have used our Christian

right to criticise the position of Judaism as imperfect, this privilege should surely extend to all its opinions, dogmatic and otherwise, on every subject, including its estimate of the Old Testament. In doing so we are only following the example of Jesus who set aside what was immature in favour of that which was full grown. This thought is recognised and accepted in the epistle to the Hebrews. The former revelation has been superseded by the latter which does not simply set it aside but completes it. The truth of God is thus progressive, from less to more; it is consistent, in harmony with what has gone before; it is imperishable, in that the lesser has been absorbed and assimilated by the greater, even in the sense that the child has grown into the man.

Recognise this fact of a "progressive expansion," and you will avoid much confusion of thought and inconsistency of spirit. The bloody persecutions of the heretics by the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, were based on the Old Testament law which condemned the disobedient, in the spirit of a tooth for a tooth, in tragic forgetfulness that a better day had dawned with the coming of Christ. We must not come to this blessed library without any thought of Scriptural perspective, as though it were a law-book for statutory legisla-

tion, and every part of it therefore of equal and final authority. Nor must we regard it as a diversified collection of proof texts that can be used without discrimination in support of slavery, Mormonism, Christian Science, Theosophy, or any fantastic creed which ingenuity and skill can formulate. It is interesting to know that the verse divisions were made by Robert Stephen in 1551 on a horse-back ride from Paris to Lyons. This may explain why the chapter and verse divisions are often so misleading and interrupt the line of thought in embarrassing ways. If we regard everything in the Bible as sacred, what about the speeches of Satan in the drama of Job? "All that a man hath will he give for his life"—is that true? It is selfish and utterly false and is condemned by the Christian martyrs of all the centuries and by those who have followed principle rather than profit. The prevalent misquotation and misapplication of Scripture is largely responsible for the wrong conceptions which prevail among people as to the value of the Bible. "This is the house of God and this is the gate of heaven," was first said of the wild stony ground of Bethel where Jacob saw in vision the ladder erected between earth and heaven. It should not then be used exclusively of a Church building because it has a larger application to

every place which is sanctified by the realised presence of God, whether it be on the high seas, the wild forests, the barren caves, the mountain slopes, the godly homes, as well as in stated places where persons meet to offer worship to God in Christ.

Think of this as a living book where the Divine is interpenetrated by the human. It ultimately proceeded from God but it came to us through men like us with similar passions, prejudices, and privations. Remember this and you will get nearer the truth than if you were to regard it as a book which fell complete from heaven in some mysterious and marvellous way. We will then accept those parts which appeal to our present needs and let the rest go, for they doubtless appeal differently to others. In this matter we are surely better in practice than in theory. Are not certain portions more frequently thumbed and read than other portions, even of the New Testament? Look at the Bible of an intelligent Christian and you will find that some pages are as clean as when the volume was bought; but turn to Psalm 23, Isaiah 40, Matthew 5, Luke 15, John 14, I Cor. 13, Rev. 22, and they are seen to have captured their readers because of the poetry of their style, the purity of their sentiments, and the sublimity of their spiritual optimism. It is not credulity

but faith which brings us into fellowship with God. We cannot then build the fair temple of character with the untempered mortar of ignorance and superstition. If we further recognise that Christ is the luminous centre of the book, that all which came before Him was preparation, and that all which followed Him has been illustration, we shall be delivered from the quagmire of perplexity and doubt.

This is a revelation of God, a communication from Him through some of our brothers who were living near Him. Their soul was like a well-exposed photo negative; the impression was clearer and the expression was accordingly lucidly convincing. They were not passive when receiving these revelations but unusually alert, and their personality is seen in their writings. The poetic splendour of Isaiah, the pathetic strain of Jeremiah, the breath of the open air in Amos, the intense aspirations of the psalmists, the passionate impulsiveness of Peter, the logical force of Paul, the analogical ability of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, the mystic glow of John—all stand out clear and distinct—each making a particular contribution towards completing the wonderful orb of Divine revelation. They are inspired because they manifest so much of the presence of God; and this is a question of de-

gree, determined by the subject matter on hand and the circumstances under which they were produced. The test of inspiration is not to be made by the arguments of logic but by the appeals of life; it is not a question of dogma but of experience. It was the God-consciousness of these men which so filled them with the Holy Spirit, that enabled them to produce these eternal writings. And we must have a spiritual affinity with them if we would understand and appreciate their thought.

The greatest enemy of the Scriptures is ignorance. This is not a Bible reading age, and most people think of it in connection with a few stray passages which have often been wrested out of the context and made to mean anything that prejudice and perversity may desire. The Bible is not an authority on science for its conceptions of the world belong to a pre-scientific age; but this fact is immaterial and we recall with humiliation the needless confusion in the Christian camp when the theory of evolution was proclaimed, because it was supposed to undermine the first chapter of Genesis and therefore the entire Bible. This book, moreover, is not an authority on history which is a modern discipline; its historical allusions must be considered in the light thrown by monuments, clay tablets, papyri, and other archæological

finds. The Bible is however the greatest authority on ethics and religion, on duty and devotion. As we use our liberty of Christian discernment, we will know how to distinguish between the things that differ and will understand that its teachings must always be tested by the touchstone which is Jesus Christ.

As you turn over its pages, you are impressed by its variety, versatility and spontaneity. It speaks to every mood of the soul; it is the literary and moral conscience of all ages, leading us along the dusty highways and byways of life towards Him who is the life indeed. What consolation in distress; what instruction in perplexity; what exhortation in uncertainty; what inspiration when our zeal is flagging and our ardour is burning low; what a companion for the quiet hour, the distracted hour, the lonely hour; what an aid to prayer, what an incentive to devotion, what an imperative to service! This is not the place to speak of its influence on art, literature, and civilisation. Take it all in all, there is not another book like it or equal to it. All the great books which have been written received their inspiration from it, and those which were written without it bear no comparison with it. Let us receive it and read it and regulate our lives by its truth all our days.

CHAPTER TWELVE: DECISIVE CLAIMS

School of Theology

"This Church of the Spirit is always being built. Its power is proportional to the spiritual vitality of the membership, to the measure of apprehension of divine resources, to the depth of insight and grasp of truth, to the prevalence of love and brotherhood, to the character of service, which the members exhibit. It possesses no other kind of power or authority than the power and authority of personal lives formed into a community by living correspondence with God, and acting as human channels and organs of his life and spirit. Such a church can meet new formulations of science and history and social ideals with no authoritative and conclusive word of God which automatically settles the issue. Its only weapons are truth and light, and these have to be continually re-discovered and refashioned to fit the facts which the age has found and verified. Its mission is *prophetic.* It does not dogmatically decide what facts must be believed, but it sees and announces the spiritual significance of the facts that are discovered and verified."

—Rufus M. Jones: "Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries," page L.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DECISIVE CLAIMS

WE are living at a time when everything is put in the crucible and tested with scientific impartiality. The halo which has surrounded sacred things is not recognised until it has demonstrated its right thereto. This demand to bring everything into the open may be resented in the case of the Church because it would seem to be an attempt to secularise it. This is not the case for it is only an effort to appraise its actual value both to the individual and the community. If we guard against mere material and commercial tests, the results will be for the better and not for the worse. So we find with regard to authority that it is changing its complexion and not its character, and when the atmosphere is cleared there will not be anarchy but the establishment of a more convincing principle of authority. It will be placed on a more stable basis and make its appeal not to fear but to the enlightened and enlightening reason. Such authority will not seek any shielding but will

fearlessly challenge investigation. It will be ready to submit its credentials at a moment's notice, confident that wherever it is understood it will be enthusiastically appreciated and accepted.

It is reported in the gospels that our Lord spoke *with* authority. He relied on the intrinsic truth and validity of His message which He had experienced in His own life. He thus appealed directly to the human heart and always made a profound impression. The religious teachers of that day spoke *by* authority which had been transmitted to them. They appealed to the voice of tradition; they relied upon organisation; they counted on the cumulative appeal of the past to such an extent as to diminish the vigorous call of the present. How tame and ineffective was this second-hand method as compared with the effectually dynamic and therefore imperative speech of the great Master. He spoke to the whole of life with discrimination and set things in their relative importance. Here we see the difference between priestly professions and prophetic power. The prophet of God speaks with assurance. He has so penetrating a message because he stands on the eternal principles of truth and righteousness. He is so sure of God that he does not hesitate to announce the divine

will and to apply it to the conditions of his own times. Is the Church inspired by such a prophetic unction? Is it governed by the Holy Spirit, in the independence of spiritual power, or is it influenced by the *Zeitgeist* of civil, social and monetary forces?

It is confessedly true that the Church professes and purposes to be the teacher of the life that is hid with Christ in God and to bear a continuous witness to Christ the living Word. The final test of the Church's vitality is not its ability to make scholars, administrators, theologians, educators, but to produce saints whose character of Christ-likeness is the most convincing argument for its authority and influence in society. We honour and love the Church because, as we have already seen, it has been the great school of holiness and goodness, of courtesy and chivalry, of truth and purity. Even in the Middle Ages when corruption was rampant throughout Europe and ignorance was resting like a pall on every land, the cloisters of the church were the centres of devotion and industry. We think of Bernard of Clairvaux and his spiritual passion for souls, in the interest of whom he wrote so many eager letters; and then we recall Francis of Assisi so benign and gracious and we cannot help feeling that the Church which encouraged such

faithful spirits was engaged in a similar work in many an obscure place during this dark period. In the midst of distractions and corruptions the church has ever appealed to the better judgment, the sober calculation, the earnest hopes, the noble aspirations, and the Godward impulses of the human race. The Church is the possessor of the living Word whose voice has been heard not often where an ecclesiastical aroma has been felt but always where humble souls with steadfast gaze and resolute spirit have communed with God in Christ.

The recognised marks of the Church are unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. We accept this but would interpret the terms in a decidedly spiritual sense. *Unity* is that of the Spirit and this is far more fundamental and permanent than what is metaphysical or creedal; it is also quite consistent with diversity and variety, but never with what results in strife and competition. *Holiness* is of character and not of ceremonial; the underlying idea is that of consecration and this is a vital experience of devotion to God and His purposes; which, however, does not secure one against inerrancy as to intellectual conceptions nor infallibility in the sense of finality of judgment. *Catholicity* does not mean merely comprehensiveness but ability of adaptation to universal

conditions, of satisfying the deepest needs of all classes, and of being at home in any clime or land. This elasticity is, however, healthily balanced by the other mark of *apostolicity* which is harmony with the essential spirit and teaching of the apostles, as we find it reflected in the New Testament. These are all practical tests and we can easily understand why more people have been impressed by the practice of the Christian life than have been by proofs from academic Christian scholarship which occupy a second place, not the first.

It has been well said that the seat of authority is not the enlightened conscience but the redeemed conscience, which has experienced the truth and thrill of the Cross and is therefore not motived by selfish irresponsibility but by a spirit which has known the discipline of sacrifice. The soul has been released from an external law but it has come under the more exacting law of love, which knows no bounds of time, place or effort. Even apostolic authority such as was exercised by Paul was not that of a lord over God's heritage in the manner of later ecclesiastics, but rather that of a loving father speaking to his children in a tone of spiritual persuasiveness. It was not a title which enforced submission but a credential which secured acceptance and obedience. In many

departments of life we must be satisfied with second-hand knowledge. The scientist explores the realms of nature and brings us his conclusions. The astronomer, the biologist, the inventor, the traveller, all return with their results and their word is established because it is based on duly verified data and not on unwarrantable assumptions and hypotheses. The religious expert is not necessarily the theologian but the saint who speaks with such impressiveness because of an inner experience of the will of God. In every case expert authority must justify itself by a convincing appeal. In the case of moral and religious authority the appeal is made to the reason, the emotions, the conscience and the will. Where this is done it is hardly necessary to appeal to the argument of antiquity.

Religious authority exercises influence only as it meets the genuine and heart-felt needs of the day. It will further be tolerated only as it honestly faces present demands and with courageous spirit considers those of to-morrow. It is not the Church which makes pompous pretensions to sanctity but the Church which is in the world to minister like its Master, whose voice will be heard and whose claims will be allowed. What then is the basis of suffrage and support? It is not the organisation, how-

ever well established; it is not the priesthood, set apart by ceremonial rites and ordinances; it is not the building, however beautiful in architectural adornment; nor is it the affluent circumstances, social and financial, however desirable and helpful these may be. They are all subordinate considerations. What constitutes the Church and gives it a unique distinction is the realised presence of Jesus Christ and the hearty fellowship of His disciples. Such a fruitful experience has been possible in the small chapel no less than in the stately cathedral. It is the privilege of poor and obscure persons as well as of those whose names are heralded far and wide. How often the church of Christ has been found in catacombs and mountain fastnesses, in forests, barns, humble homes, and rude structures, where men and women, weighed down by the cares of life, have offered worship to God in Christ and have enjoyed His presence which dispelled their gloom and brought into their lives the light of everlasting joy. Truly Christ is central in the faith and worship of the church. He is the centre of light, radiating throughout this dark world; He is the source of life, resurrecting those who are dead in sin and evil; He is the heart of love, regenerating the souls of men so that a new passion seizes them and they are led out into

larger ways of service. Christ therefore is the supreme moral and spiritual authority who has inspired a new ideal of life which cannot be realised except by His aid. So long then as He is recognised and worshipped as the living Lord, the church need never fear that it will meet with disaster.

There are different conceptions of the church: from which we can conclude what is essential to authority: (I) The Roman Catholic at first thought of the church as an aristocratic republic governed by bishops; then the idea prevailed of it as a constitutional monarchy with the pope at the head; but since 1870, when the dogma of papal infallibility was pronounced, the church has been regarded as an absolute monarchy, and always and exclusively to be identified with the ecclesiastical organisation. The modernist movement is a sign that many within the borders of the Roman Church are seeking the privilege of freedom of discussion in place of unquestioning submission to the Roman curia. (II) The Anglican and Protestant Episcopal Churches lay claim to the historic episcopate, which holds the seat of authority. The theory of apostolic succession gives final power to the bishops, who, it is maintained, received it in a direct line without interruption from the apostles. Such a view holds

to a mechanical theory of spiritual inspiration and fails to recognise that the grounds of episcopal continuity are historically untenable. (III) The essence of the Protestant view consists of the unity in Jesus Christ and the privilege by divine grace of the spiritual priesthood of all believers. Such a conception provides for changes in the forms of church polity which need not be the same in every age nor in every land in the same age. What it shall be must be determined by the necessities of the people. The church does not exist to perpetuate systems of organisation but to proclaim the possibilities of sanctification of the entire personality through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The particular mission of the church is to make real the rule of God in the world, and to make righteous the men and women therein by imparting religion as a life of love, peace, joy and blessedness. Let us briefly note some of the aspects of this functioning. (1) It sets forth Christianity as the religion which exercises spiritual and dynamic authority, able to meet the deep needs of men and to produce a gracious and noble type of character. (2) The church has the credit of developing personality to higher stages of spiritual perfection, and in doing so for a much larger company of men

and women, than any other institution. In this connection we think not only of the far-famed leaders like Paul, Origen, Augustine, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, Cromwell, Wesley, Asbury, Livingstone, William Booth, Spurgeon. We also consider the vast array of witnesses whom no man can number, who have been faithful in their several callings, not only in Christendom, but also on the mission field where the native Christians have let their light shine to the glory of the Redeemer. (3) The church has shown remarkable skill in adaptability and flexibility; and in spite of certain obscurantists who have tried to stay the clock of progress, the gospel has been so proclaimed as to demonstrate its concern in the divers interests of the world. (4) We cannot deal lightly with the Christian life and activity of over nineteen centuries. The church has well been called "the treasure house of spiritual discoveries, experiences, endeavours, victories." It is this testimony of saintly souls, "sounding together," which has meant more than any spectacular appeal, and which convinces because it answers to what is noblest and best within us.

"My kingdom is not of this world." How strange these words sound in the light of history! The church of the fourth century engaged in a desperate struggle to secure control

of the world-empires, grievously deluded that it had business with temporalities. A compromise was thus effected which not only secularised the church but introduced elements of spiritual hazard into it from which it has not yet been able to rid itself. The Protestant Reformation upset the traditional understanding of ecclesiastical authority but, as often happens with protests, the features of negation were over-conspicuous. While emphasis was laid on the validity of the Christian consciousness as against ecclesiastical dogmatism, this conception of liberty was not consistently thought out, with the unfortunate result that bibliolatry took the place of ecclesiolatry. This anticlimax happened when the glowing experience of Christ began to weaken and decay, and when many felt the need for some external authority to offset Romanism. The freedom enjoyed by Luther and Calvin in interpreting the Scriptures was made impossible by Protestant scholasticism. Protests were made against this externalising of religion because it weakened the liberty of conscience and the vigour of religious conviction. These consistent Protestants were, however, in the minority, and a static view of revelation was maintained as though God had spoken to the fathers but had no communication for the sons. Such a theory is clearly against

the facts as we recall how the promise of Christ has been fulfilled where believers have met in His name. They have been enabled to exercise power in proportion as they gave themselves to prayer, and practised sacrifice and discharged their obligations as a duty of delight and an acceptable privilege.

The authority of the church, then, is not based on traditionalism, venerable as that may be; nor on ecclesiasticism, complicated as is its methods of argumentation; nor on intellectualism, indispensable as are its services; nor on denominationalism, valid as its influence has been at different epochs in the life of the church. These approaches to the modern mind are blocked and yet spiritual authority is inevitable. We may turn it aside or even turn it away but it will insist on being heard. The experience of the soul which has trusted in Christ and has found Him to be a true and efficient Saviour is a fact with which scientist, psychologist and historian must reckon. When men and women, sane in every walk of life, and whose judgment is accepted in business transactions, speak concerning Christ, we shall be irrational if we try to explain away their testimony of indebtedness to Him, as due to morbid introspection, or abnormal hysteria, or fantastic vagaries of the imagination. Let the church

insist on attending to its own business which, first, last and all the time, is to lead people to God through Christ and to establish them in Christlike character. Thus only will it speak with authority to a distracted generation like the present which needs most of all to get in touch with God. The future of Christianity is with that church which can speak with spiritual assurance and enable people to experience the reality of God, to enjoy the companionship of Christ, and to practise the virtues and graces of the Gospel, in the power of the Divine Spirit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ACCEPTABLE CREDENTIALS

"In our day the Christian congregation suffers from much depreciation, due to a conspiracy of causes, both within and without the Church, which it is not now necessary to detail. In face of them the recollection may be useful of what opportunities and what inspirations some of the greatest men and women have found in the instrument which we administer. Of no other routine in social life may we more justly say that *princes digged this well,* that *the nobles of the people delved it with the scepter and with their staves.* The influence of the Christian congregation upon history, the contribution of the parish to the world, is a subject which is waiting for a historian. He will lay bare a thousand almost forgotten wells, which from all the centuries still feed some of the strongest currents of human life. Many types of character; much that is imperishable in literature and art; much that has become world-wide in education and the organisation of charity, have found their origins in congregational life."

—*George Adam Smith: "The Forgiveness of Sins and Other Sermons," page 231.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ACCEPTABLE CREDENTIALS

THE church must justify its place in society by showing that it is doing a work which is not possible for any other institution. If it has been the greatest force in the redemption of society in former centuries, can it continue that particular function to-day? If it has appealed convincingly to the intellect of former times and has exercised authority over the life because of its ability to satisfy the deepest needs of man, does it still have power to do this? These and similar questions have an answer not only in the pages of Church history, but also in the contemporary annals of the modern church. We must acknowledge that the church has often yielded to the temptation to go outside of its own province and interfere with the business of other organisations, under the mistaken impression that it was thus rendering service to God and man. Hildebrand's vision of a theocratic State in the eleventh century has had more to do with diverting the energies of the church into alien channels than

almost any other programme. The leaders of the church have always been slow to learn the truth that concentration is the secret of effectiveness, and so in spreading their efforts over a wide area they have done many things but none too well.

How often does it happen that the preacher is called upon to discourse on timely topics of the day? They certainly have a bearing on the welfare of humanity, like asylums for the feeble-minded, hospitals for the crippled, sanitariums for the cure of tuberculosis, campaigns against white slavery, child labour, and every other form of social distress. Such pulpit appeals must of necessity be based on second-hand information, often of a biassed character; and where such methods are encouraged a stigma will rest on the pulpit, and its powers of persuasion will become weakened. The supreme business of the pulpit is to enable us to understand the glorious revelation of Jesus Christ, which unfolds the stimulating truths of the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, and the Saviourhood of Jesus. Where all this is comprehensively interpreted and applied in the light of the pressing needs of people, the results will make for the building up of the manhood, the womanhood, and the childhood of the entire

race, in every department of industrial, social, and humanitarian activity.

When we ask what is the platform of the church we are at once confronted by the question of the creeds. It is through them that the church has made confession to the world of its faith, hope and purpose. There are some who say that the Bible is their creed, but this is a pious generalisation. The Bible is a record of the progressive revelation of God and of the religious experience of those to whom it came through many forms and fashions. It is furthermore an interpretation of both the revelation and the experience. Its preciousness therefore is of the greatest worth. All Christians look upon the Bible as their charter but how widely they disagree in their understanding of it. Their creeds are based on the teaching of the Bible, and they have validity only as they are in harmony with the full scope of the thought and spirit of the Bible. But where Protestanism gives liberty of interpretation in the freedom of the Spirit, each age is under obligation to formulate its own creeds, in accordance with its own conceptions of Christian truth and practice. The historic creeds of Christendom reflect the thought and life of the periods during which they were formulated. The Apostles' creed received its name not be-

cause of apostolic authorship but because it set forth a series of propositions which were in accord with the teachings of the apostles. In its present form it dates from the year 700 A. D. or thereabouts. It is the lineal descendant of the old Roman Symbol which is generally conceded to date from the latter part of the second century and was originally used by candidates for baptism. Not only on this account but also because of its practical drift, the Apostles' creed is used more largely by all branches of the church than any of the other symbols. The Nicene creed is associated with the Council of Nicea, 325, and bears marks of the intense controversy of that period concerning the person of Christ. The central truth which it emphasises is the Incarnation of Christ, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." The Athanasian creed is even more distinctively metaphysical; it was conceived in a purely dogmatic spirit, in which moral and spiritual issues received subordinate consideration. It further reflects very conspicuously the bitter controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries when Athanasius and Arius were the leaders of the respective parties.

These three creeds are among the accepted

standards of all branches of the Christian Church. But it is evident to any thoughtful student of these venerated symbols that they do not contain much which the church was called upon to emphasise in later centuries, particularly since the Reformation. Nothing is said about the central evangelical truth that the sinner is justified by faith in the living Christ. No provision is made for the missionary obligations of the church, nor for the social task of Christianity, nor for other issues which modern demands and necessities have thrust upon our attention. We nevertheless use the Apostles' creed in our churches but it is with the understanding that we read into its clauses the later findings of Christian scholarship and testimony, which are in perfect consistency with the mind and spirit of the early church. When we hear so much about Christian union and Christian unity, it is well to remember that such a desirable condition can be possible only as we hold to a more simplified creed which will emphasise the experimental aspects of the Christian life and the distinctive spirit of Christianity which is love for God and man in the name of Jesus Christ. For after all, as it was well put, it is not *what* we believe so much as in *whom* we believe which is the question of the greatest moment. Let us further remind our-

selves that if former ages speak to us through their creeds, confessions, and even controversies, it is both rational and logical that we bear our own responsibility to think and act that later generations may receive from us a message of guidance which will make increasingly clear and attractive the wonderful power of the evangel of redemption to cope with and meet the needs of the whole world.

The church must of necessity be conservative. It will hardly do to accept promptly every panacea of reform, although its advocates may be most ardent and sincere. There are several reasons for this attitude of hesitation in the presence of change. One is the time-serving spirit of the fear of consequences, another is the fact of being unduly wedded to the past under the prevailing notion that the glory of the former house is greater than that of the latter. Yet another reason is that the church has unconsciously allowed the dead hand of the world to rest upon it, and the spiritual paralysis has been a serious blight, as is seen in lands where State-endowed churches exist. A desire to conserve what is best in the rich legacies of the Christian centuries has not always been accompanied by a willingness to consider advances beyond established positions. And what makes the situation so dismal is the fact that the party

of progress and expansion has frequently been separated from the party of caution by mutual misunderstandings. One of the unfortunate phases in the history of theological controversy was the fact that while the ecclesiastics were gaining dogmatic victories for the church, there was a degeneration in the moral practice of the church members. Doctrines were being established at the expense of deeds of Christian rectitude and devotion. Dean Henson quotes with approval the following from Gregory Nazianzen of the fourth century: "If I must write the truth, I am disposed to avoid every assembly of bishops: for of no synod have I seen a profitable end, but rather an addition to than a diminution of evils; for the love of strife and the thirst for superiority are beyond the power of words to express." * This is no exaggeration, for it is descriptive of conditions in every century. Indeed it is one of the chronic diseases of ecclesiasticism; and if we note the fact in this place it is to utter a word of warning that we guard ourselves against what has insidiously entered in and weakened the spiritual vitality of the church.

This, however, is the dark side of the picture and it has a depressing effect. An impartial survey calls for the consideration of the

* "Moral Discipline in the Christian Church," page 136.

brighter aspects of church history. There are spots in the sun but we do not forget to be glad for the heat and health which this central luminary confers on the world. In spite of many lapses and errors the church has been the great agent through which the religion of Christ has discharged its redemptive mission in every century and land. It may therefore be regarded as the salt of society, working for the prevention of evils and for deliverance from them. It is also the light of the world; when corruption was deadly and social bitterness was rife and selfishness in myriad forms was like a desolating scourge, the leavening influence of the church was at work. Souls athirst for God found refreshment in the cloisters of the church; those who were perplexed by the defeats and sorrows of life obtained succour for their spirits in the atmosphere of devotion in the church. Tasks which were laid down in sheer despair were resumed by the courage received from the spiritual guides of the church. In what other society has there been so large a company of men and women, whose lives have been distinguished by saintly devotion and consecrated tenderness and eager sympathy and moral uplift and spiritual nobleness? A great deal more should have been done, but let us not permit our criticism to deal unjustly with that

institution which of all others has stood for the supreme worth of spiritual riches.

While creeds are of value as summarised expressions of the Christian faith they must not be regarded as final. The course of history has proven repeatedly that more light and truth have shone upon the world from the one Source of everlasting Light. All this did not contradict the conclusions of the creeds but only made it evident that they need enrichment by the addition of such clauses as will make Christianity more vitalisingly competent for the present crisis. If, however, the creeds are to be regarded as authoritative declarations they must be endorsed by practical Christian living. This test has not failed the Church. Refer to a volume like "Gesta Christi," by C. Loring Brace, and you have a most inspiring recital of the many-sided benefits which have been imparted by Christianity in every age and land. Such achievements constitute, as we have seen in Chapter VII, the most impregnable argument for the gracious versatility of the Evangel to supply the needs of all people that on earth do dwell. When we speak of Christianity we mean the church, without which it could never have been propagated throughout the world. What Christ expected His church to be it has partially become, in spite of errors, discords and

reverses. Many volumes have been written to chronicle its notable contributions to the welfare of the race, so that it is not possible to summarise the activities of nigh twenty centuries in a brief paragraph. We would, however, say to the enquirer after positive proofs, to look around; but lest it be a superficial survey we would add that he should look beneath and behind the outspread panorama, and remember that all the good came through the church of the living Christ. The church has assuredly been the mother of charities and philanthropies; it has given the impetus to humane legislation, and popular education; its leaders have been among the reformers of abuses, who have waged uncompromising war against social and industrial iniquities, who have worked for the uplift of the peoples in the habitations of cruelty at home and on the mission field, and who have laboured incessantly and resolutely that more people may have a fair share of the "leisure and treasure and pleasure of life." When the church failed to secure beneficent results it was "not by being Christian overmuch, but by failing to be Christian."*

The original impulses and motives which led men and women to consecrate themselves to

* "Erasmus and Other Essays," by Marcus Dods, D.D., page 311.

Christ need to be constantly revived and strengthened. There never comes a time when the Christian can say that enough has been done and that he may rest on past work. The Christian soldier is never off guard and under no circumstances can he lower his standards or take for granted that all is well while he is indolent or negligent. It was when the church assumed too much and when it presumed to dictate after the fashion of worldly conquerors that it lost spiritual power. It is needless to say that without sacrificial devotion, the glory of the church will cease to captivate the heart and will of the people. When the pope showed St. Thomas the riches of the Vatican he said, "No more can the church say silver and gold have I none," to which the saint and scholar answered: "Neither can it any more say, 'rise up and walk.'" The influence of the church is characteristically spiritual, and where this is not seen and shown the words addressed to the church in Sardis are in place: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead." The presence of obscure companies of believers outside the organised church has always been a protest that the church has not supplied the bread of life to eager spirits who have counted that to be far more precious than anything which the world had to offer. It will

not do to say that some of these "come-outers" were fanatical. Grant it and yet the fact remains that the Waldenses, the Albigenses, the Ranters, the Quakers, and many other devout souls endured persecution rather than sacrifice their convictions of the truth in Christ Jesus, as they understood it.

We think of the Apostolic age as the period when the high water mark of spiritual excellence was reached. And yet the period which immediately followed it showed a marked spiritual decadence. It was as though the pendulum had swung to the other extreme. One big reason for this was that the Christians were resting on the laurels won by their predecessors and were not careful to practise the presence of God and to maintain fellowship with Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Numerical and financial tests are not always conclusive. If we are making less of personal conversion and Christian assurance and the witness of the Spirit and the growth in holiness, we are feeding on chaff. If we are less interested in the Bible as a book of spiritual culture, and fail in the practice of prayer as a means of grace for the accomplishment of our responsibilities, if we are not keen in testimony as an opportunity for Christian confession, and if we do not engage in personal work to win souls for

Christ, then, whatever else we may have gained, we have lost that which is the peculiar glory of the Church of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We must then seek to Christianise the church and pray earnestly and fervently, clamouring for a speedy revival of the fundamental and essential experience which will restore unto us the joys of salvation. The grape-vines which are pruned in the early Spring bear luscious fruit in the Fall. The church has that which everybody needs but these treasures of grace can be made accessible and available only as the members have a quickening sense of their obligations as the representatives of Christ. In the new and better day which is dawning there will be greater and not less demand for the service of the church. Its great business will be to interpret the mind of God, and to expound the truth of a world-wide fraternity, and to offer the grace of the Saviour Christ which shall empower all men in their every intercourse to act "soberly and righteously and godly" for the greater glory of God in the larger welfare of men. This can be assuredly done as we are possessed with the passion of the Cross, and are inspired by the purity of the Spirit, and have the experience of the forgiveness and peace of Christ.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE LARGER VISION

"In the Church we have men massed together in one corporation and brotherhood for the worship of the eternal God; and even the disinterested observer will surely see gathered there the most saintly and the most consecrated lives; he will discern the spirit it breathes, the character it fashions, the hope it entertains for men, the appeal it makes to all to enter into the fellowship of the higher life, and thus hasten the coming of the kingdom of God. It bears witness to a world that is both present and unseen, and into which every one can enter now, and to spiritual ends which the lowliest can further. If Christian men could dwell together in unity, thinking of what is common to them in the faith and not of what divides them, finding their vocation and their delight in propagating the spirit of their Master, then the Church would impose itself upon the mind as the nation does, becoming a standard of conduct, a check on every evil, and a stimulus to a wider good."

—George Steven: "The Psychology of the Christian Soul," page 225.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE LARGER VISION

IF the presence of the church in any community is a healthy sign, the presence of many church organisations, far in excess of the actual needs of the people and taxing their ability for support, is not a healthy sign. It has often happened that in an attempt to justify its right to exist, one denomination has impugned the claims and privileges of another. It has even gone to the length of checkmating the other's influence under the delusion that it may thereby increase its own membership. All this implies competition and rivalry in ungracious ways, with misrepresentation and vilification of each other's positions and a general weakening of the testimony of the church to the spiritual enrichment in Christ and the strengthening of character, both of the individual and of society. On the other hand where the religious forces of a community can be united it is possible to present a more aggressive and impressive front, with a view to fighting the evil in the world and converting men from the error of their ways

and establishing the Kingdom of truth, righteousness and fraternity, in the name of the common Master and Lord.

The churches have reached the stage of passing complimentary resolutions in honour of each other. This is a noteworthy advance, for the spirit of courtesy is much to be desired in any attempt at mutual understanding. As we felicitate each other, we shall also facilitate the day of Christian blessedness when all shall be one in Christ our Lord. In this connection we cannot improve on the large principle of John Wesley, who was a great churchman and a greater Christian: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." A splendid representative of American Christianity, George W. Pepper, in his recent Yale Lectures, "A Voice from the Crowd," said: "The principal obstacle in the path of unity is a perverse refusal to recognise differences of apprehension as facts to be reckoned with rather than as follies to be condemned" (page 166). Coming from a layman of the Protestant Episcopal Church, it is a striking commentary on Article XIX of the Articles of Religion of his own communion. The second paragraph thereof reads: "As the Church of *Jerusalem, Alexandria,* and *Antioch* have erred; so also the Church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner

of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith." This is the sort of utterance which claims for its promulgators immunity from error; and yet the history of the Episcopal Church has been marked by corruptions no less serious than those found in the churches which this article condemns in the *ex cathedra* spirit. It also has erred, and that very grievously, in its obstinate refusal to recognise a large catholicity which comprehends all who hold the common faith in Christ, who enjoy the common experience of redemption, and who confess allegiance to the one and sole Saviour of the world.

The sudden and violent reversal of the hands of the clock of progress is one of the tragedies of history. The noble ecumenical gathering of Christian churches in Edinburgh in 1910, in the interests of missionary work throughout the world, was a notable contribution towards Christian unity. It seemed to many that the era of better things had dawned for Christianity. There were, however, dissenting voices. But how insistent was the opposition to unity became known later, and that from an unlooked for quarter. The occasion was a missionary conference at Kikuyu, British East Africa, on June 7, 1913. Those who participated in this fraternal gathering were Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers, Baptists, and

Lutherans. They were confronted by a militant Mohammedanism and had come together to devise ways by which they might establish the Cross where the Crescent was in control. The deliberations were concluded by the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the Scotch Presbyterian Church. It was administered by the two Anglican bishops. This exhibition of Christian unity was violently resented by the High Church bishop of Zanzibar who threw a bomb into the camp. His contention was that non-episcopal churches are "bodies whose very existence is hostile to Christ's Holy Church." Had not the European war diverted the attention of Christians from this ecclesiastical issue, the course of disruption might have been serious. It is bound to make its appearance soon, but we fervently hope that the sacramentalists and ceremonialists will come to a better understanding of what is vitally essential in Christian faith and fellowship.*

Sectarianism is practically a dead issue except among its self-constituted custodians of the High Church party, who insist that the whole truth is contained within their little segment of the large circle of God's grace. Al-

* Cf. "Kikuyu," by Dean Henson, *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1914, page 481; "Unity and Missions," by Arthur J. Brown, page 189 ff.

though it is humiliating to confess, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that it is a social barrier which is keeping denominations from co-operating more heartily with each other. In so far as this is the case, the modern church has departed from the central standards of Christ and the New Testament. The qualifications for membership and service in the church are not primarily intellectual, as though it were an organisation for scholars; nor are they social, as though it were a select club; nor again financial, as if it were a corporation; nor nationalistic, as though it belonged to a particular country; nor ecclesiastical, as though the institution were the big consideration; nor even dogmatic, as if the last word were contained in the creeds. The absolutely first and last condition is spiritual, and it has to do with character which bears a likeness to Christ, to whom the soul is related by the loyalty of love and devotion. Where this supreme test is passed, all other differences can not only be tolerated but also respected. This is the basis of unity which must be repeatedly emphasised; "not a unity of the legalist which will cramp and stifle, but a unity of the Free Spirit of God which will bring men the love and strength of one another, with a tolerance of all human saintliness what-

ever its form, and a concentration upon the essentials." *

That which is essential to Christianity we have already seen in previous chapters. What we are concerned with in the present study is to note some of the factors which are subversive of unity and also those encouraging movements which are manifestly inspired by the divine Spirit. Let us take a hurried glance at the past. The early Christians were impelled by the eager constraint of Christ to spread the Gospel of redemption. A great deal of the missionary work was done by laymen and what they accomplished received the approval of the apostles, as in the case of Antioch (Acts 11. 19-26). The churches which were established under these circumstances were independent units and yet they were related to each other and to the mother church at Jerusalem by the uniting bonds of the gladsome experience of Christ's salvation. They were thus mutually helpful to each other. The churches of Macedonia, for instance, sent contributions in money to the poor Christians in Jerusalem, and they in turn received instruction how to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). It will take

* "The Light Within. A Study of the Holy Spirit," by C. L. Slattery, D.D., page 235.

us too far afield to go into the controversies of the Apostolic Church, in which Paul was the champion of Christian liberty against the provincialists who advocated ceremonial conformity in the interests of ecclesiastical uniformity. They were then defeated and Christianity was released for a work of world-wide expansion. And yet the representatives of these men have appeared all through the history of the church and have unwittingly done much to neutralise its influence. A modern exponent of this melancholy position is Bishop Gore of Oxford, who early in his brilliant career espoused the cause of Christian progress and himself edited a volume of essays entitled "Lux Mundi." And yet he wrote with reference to the fraternal fellowship at Kikuyu: "I feel quite sure that to the great mass of High Churchmen such an open Communion seems to involve principles so totally subversive of Catholic order and doctrine as to be strictly intolerable, in the sense that they could not continue in a fellowship which required of them to tolerate the recurrence of such incidents." What is really intolerable is the chronic recurrence of this militant ecclesiasticism which makes more of ritual than of righteousness, of ceremonial than of character, and is so obsessed by a theory that it fails to

deal justly with facts which cannot be squared therewith.

There are, however, more hopeful signs and evidences that the churches are working for the coming of a Christian catholicity, when each and every denomination will think and act in terms of the entire church of Christ, and do so without violating loyalty to the distinctive convictions of each. It is a great step in advance when the churches recognise that co-operation of some kind is necessary in the presence of the titanic evils which menace society. Another interesting indication is the attempt to understand each other's respective positions. It means much when representatives of the churches can come together under the auspices of the World Conference on Faith and Order, at several sessions, since its very timely organization, to discuss questions relating to the Church, the Sacraments, the Ministry. A similar gathering was held in England composed of representatives of the Established and the Free Churches, who issued an interim report in February, 1916, setting forth their agreements and differences, and looking towards a settlement which will conserve the interests of all and thus advance the cause of Christ. A closer co-operation between the churches has been frequently seen on the mission field. This

has been a marked feature of missionary work all through the centuries. Just as the church at Antioch took the initiative in the forward movements of the Primitive Church, so the church on the mission field, occupying the circumference of activities and less bound by traditional customs, has produced results towards Christian union which have put to the blush what has been done in this direction by the churches at home. As a matter of fact, the World Missionary Conference was made possible by the missionaries, who not only made some of the most telling addresses at its sessions, but also gave the cue to the leaders of the home churches, in enlarging their vision of a redeemed humanity and in emphasising what is most distinctive of the Faith in Christ. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and The National Council of Evangelical Free Churches in Great Britain, are also attempts in the right direction. They are all healthy indications that the time has come for reinterpretation, readjustment, restatement and a spiritual rapprochement, in the name of the common Saviour of us all.

We are ready to acknowledge that the several denominations came into existence in protest against the abuse of power and in disapproval of the corruptions in the church, owing

to the spread of the spirit of worldiness. It was further caused by a desire to emphasise a particular truth or experience, as is seen in the very names of some of these denominations. Like the Protestant Reformation, they were reactions against the spiritual deadness and low moral tone of the established churches. In the United States these sects arose partly in protest against the existing churches which were not discharging their mission and partly to give expression to some abnormal religious idea. When the causes of dissatisfaction disappeared, the dissenting churches had gone too far in their organisations to call a halt and to return to the fold which they had renounced. The question of reunion is therefore not so easy as may seem to be from a superficial view. Men, buildings, endowments, have to be considered. There must be a willingness to practise sacrifice on a large scale for the sake of the cause. This implies a spirit of enthusiasm which must be kindled at Calvary, if it is to be profitably effectual. With it must also go the conviction of the urgent need of the world for Christ and of the spiritual waste of duplicating effort for the sake of maintaining an institution and not of redeeming society. The new psychology is teaching us that sufficient justice has not been done to the place of the will. We have

appealed to the emotions and to the intellect to incite belief, but we have failed to recognise that belief is very much a question of the will. Present all the facts and arguments that can be mustered, and let it be done as persuasively as possible; but do not forget to summon the will to surrender to the spell and thrill of the programme of Christian unity, and to labour heartily to carry it out to a successful issue. This cannot be done by stampeding any company of Christians. It can be brought about only as the church is educated to see the advantages of co-operation and of the costs of progress. We will then be ready to act intelligently, and profitably.

The attempt has been occasionally made with success where in a community-church the different denominations have united without necessarily renouncing their historic traditions. It is a question that deserves the most careful consideration whether such a course can be carried out on a larger scale. Can the Baptist unite and yet hold that immersion is the proper method, but nevertheless commune at the Lord's Supper with those who accept infant baptism? Yes, if he ceases to be intolerant of other methods and if his scruples are respected by those who differ from him. The Episcopalian can also join, if he accepts the New Testament view

that the church is a spiritual community which is made so, not by the transmission of spiritual gifts by episcopally-ordained men, but by the conferring of them directly by the Spirit of grace and light. Much should also be done to improve the devotional expression of our public worship, and here not a little can be learned from our Episcopal brother. The Congregationalist can continue to believe in the independance of the church, and yet be liberal enough to unite with those who hold different interpretations, without letting that fact interrupt his fellowship with them. The Presbyterian can retain his modified Calvinistic creed and rejoice in the sovereign grace of God which has provided a full salvation in Christ to all who believe. The Lutheran can also be at home if he does not insist on his peculiar doctrine concerning the elements used at the Lord's Supper. The Methodist need have no trouble if all agree in emphasising the experience of a personal redemption in Jesus Christ. Where such a church can be established, it will set forth the wideness of God's mercy, the depth of His grace, the opulence of His love, and the glory of the blessed Redeemer who saves to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. Such a church will, moreover, proclaim the truth that sin is the fearful divider and the fretful excluder, and

not disagreements in matters of doctrine, polity and worship. All this may seem to be far too utopian, but it is nevertheless worth having before us as an ideal.

Let us then acknowledge that organic union is as much a dream to-day as when the seer of Patmos beheld the Holy City descending from heaven. Not amalgamation but federation is the more profitable course, in view of the present distress and hardness of heart. Our aim should not be external unity where all Christians will subscribe to one legal constitution. "It is the will of the True Pastor of the Universal Church that His flock shall be one, but He does not require that it shall be included in a single fold." * Such a unity is truly apostolic. In the early church there were varieties of types of experience and traits of character, and yet all were one in Christ, and all were exultingly harmonious in exalting "the Name which is above every name." One result of federation will be to lessen that unhealthy competition between churches in a town, to such an extent that it will be possible to exercise discipline, in the interests of character and righteousness. An unworthy member of one church will not be welcomed by another church unless

* "The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints," by H. B. Swete, D.D., page 22.

there are credentials. The several branches of Protestantism will thus cease to be not only disunited and competitive, but will also be able to co-operate in a larger way for the furtherance of social righteousness and everything that directly benefits the welfare of humanity. In our programme for Christian union, we must not ignore what Sir W. Robertson Nicoll has described as "the Church outside the churches." These elect spirits belong to no organisation, accept neither rule nor ritual; but their allegiance to the Spirit of Christ is shown "in deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn for miserable aims that end with self." It is a mutual loss, theirs and ours, that we are not together; and yet we without them cannot be perfect. We are, however, confident that in the happy to-morrow, when spiritual bonds will be regarded as stronger than ecclesiastical barriers, room will be made for these rare souls, and a welcome granted them into the household of faith, where we enjoy the fellowship of good works, and the blessedness of faith, hope, and love.

"From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
'Hallelujah, Hallelujah.'"

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